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Robert Peccia &
Associates
Environmental
assessment for
STPHS 430-1(2)1
one mile east of
Helena (Canyon

Environmental Assessment for

STPHS 430-1(2)1
One Mile East of Helena (Canyon Ferry Road)
Lewis & Clark County, Montana

(Control #2370)

Submitted Pursuant to
42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c)
and
Section 2-3-104, 75-1-201, M.C.A.
by the
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration, Region 8
and the
State of Montana
Department of Transportation

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for
STPHS 430-1(2)1

One Mile East of Helena - Canyon Ferry Road
(P.M.S. Control № 2370)
in
LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY

This document is prepared in conformance with the *Montana Environmental Policy Act* (MEPA) requirements and contains the information required for an Environmental Assessment under the provisions of ARM 18.2.237(2) and 18.2.239. It is also prepared in conformance with the *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* requirements for an Environmental Assessment under 23 CFR 771.119.

Submitted pursuant to:

42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c) and
Sections 2-3-104, 75-1-201, M.C.A.

by the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Highway Administration

and the

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Submitted by:

Joel M.
Montana Department of Transportation
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Date: 5-1-97

Reviewed and Approved for Distribution:

Federal Highway Administration
For Division Administrator

Date: 5-1-97

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I. DESCRIPTION of the PROPOSED ACTION

A. Project Location

The MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MDT), in cooperation with Lewis and Clark County and the City of Helena, is planning to improve Federal Aid Urban (FAU) Route 5818 and Secondary Route 430 by building a new bridge over Prickly Pear Creek and reconstructing or realigning a portion of the roadway. The project is located at the northeast edge of the City of Helena in Lewis and Clark County. This proposed project is located in Sections 15, 16, 21, and 22 of Township-10-North, Range-3-West, M.P.M.

The project begins on Custer Avenue within the City of Helena at the intersection of East Custer Avenue, Secondary Route 280 (York Road) and Secondary 430 (Canyon Ferry Road) and continues easterly across Prickly Pear Creek to its end near the City's Water Treatment Plant. This project is located immediately north of the Helena Regional Airport in flat to gently rolling terrain. Commercial and residential uses exist east of the Custer Avenue/York Road/Canyon Ferry Road intersection. Agricultural uses with irrigated pasture exist near the east end of the project corridor. The project's location is shown in **FIGURE 1**.

The project begins within the city limits at the "wye intersection" formed by the meeting of East Custer Avenue, York Road, and Canyon Ferry Road, located 1.1± kilometers (km), or 0.7 miles, west of km 0.0 (M.P. 0.0) on Secondary Route 430. The project then heads easterly for a distance of 2.4± km (1.5 miles) to end near km 1.77± (M.P. 1.1). **PLATES 1** and **2** present photographs showing the general project area.

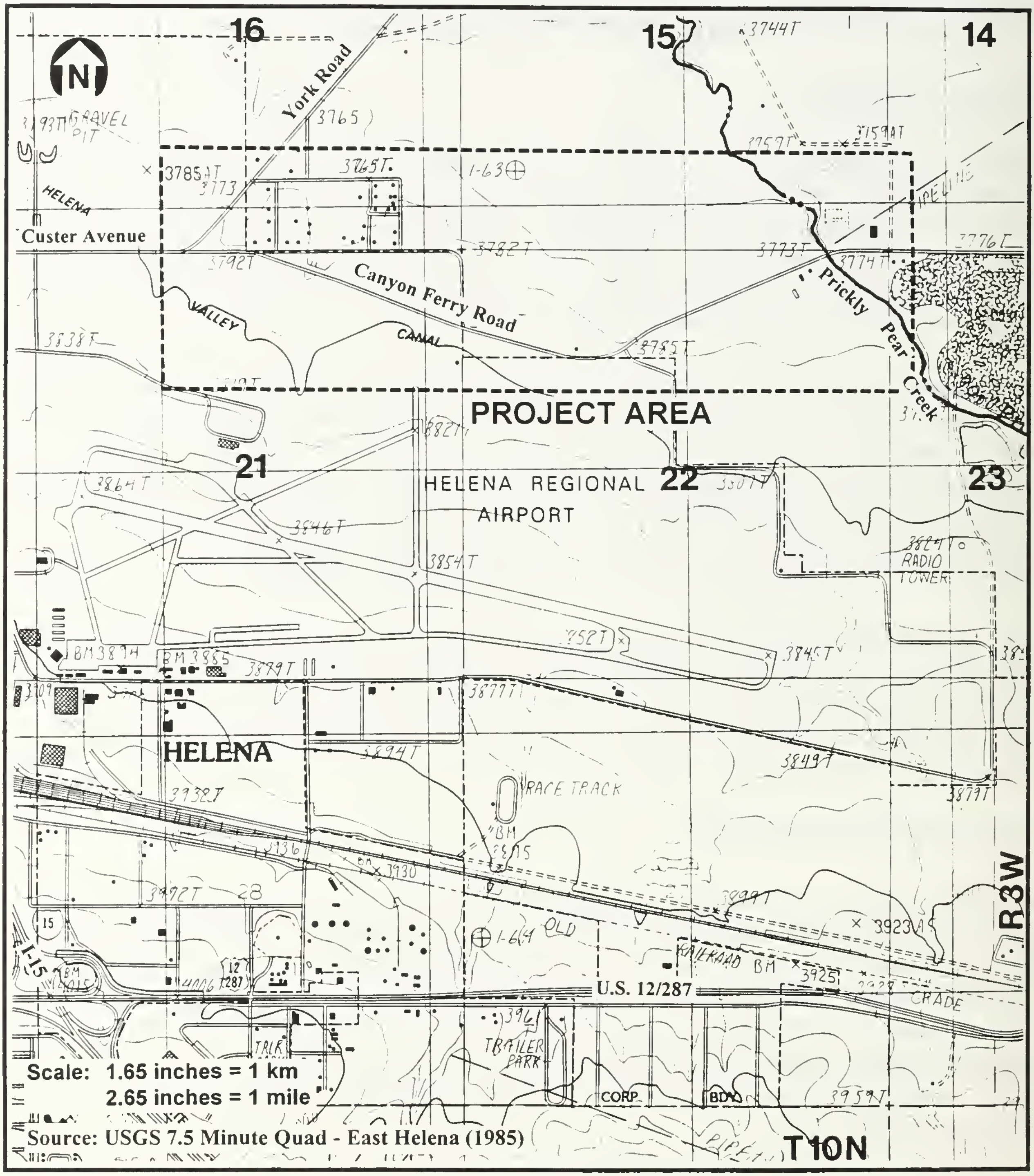
B. Description of the Project

This proposed project will construct a new bridge over Prickly Pear Creek and realign or reconstruct portions of Secondary 430. The project will provide a new 12.0 meter (40-foot) wide paved roadway and bridge designed to meet standards for Secondary routes. The new road will be a "rural" design with two 3.6 meter (12-foot) wide travel lanes and two 2.4 meter (8-foot) wide shoulders. The project improvements will include acquiring new right-of-way, relocating conflicting utilities, clearing and grubbing, grading, surface drainage, plant mix surfacing, constructing a new bridge, signing and striping, seeding, fencing and other miscellaneous items.

The horizontal and vertical alignment will meet the requirements for a design speed of 100 km/h (60 mph). This is consistent with design standards for facilities with similar functional classifications as outlined in MDT's ***Road Design Manual***.

C. Project Funding

Due to the involvement of both the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County, various funding



Scale: 1.65 inches = 1 km
2.65 inches = 1 mile
Source: USGS 7.5 Minute Quad - East Helena (1985)

FIGURE 1
Project Location
One Mile East of Helena (Canyon Ferry Road)
STPHS 430-1 (2) 1

sources will be used to implement this proposed project. Portions of the road and bridge construction are eligible for funding under the Surface Transportation Program Hazard Elimination and Safety (STPHS). Some portions of the new roadway construction and work at the York Road and Canyon Ferry Road intersection are not eligible for STPHS funds but are eligible for Surface Transportation Program Secondary (STPS) and Surface Transportation Program Urban (STPU) funds. The MDT receives these funds from allocations under the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

The combined funding of the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County will comprise more than 20% of the total cost of this project. A Memorandum of Understanding between the City, the County, and MDT has been prepared to specify the terms and conditions for developing this project.

Plate 1:
Photographs of One Mile East Of Helena Project Area

Photo 1
Looking west at the "wye" intersection of Secondary Highway 430 (Canyon Ferry Road), York Road, and East Custer Avenue.

Photo 2
Looking easterly along East Custer Avenue. Helena School Tracts subdivision is to the left of the photograph and Secondary Highway 430 is to the right.

Plate 2: Photographs of One Mile East Of Helena Project Area

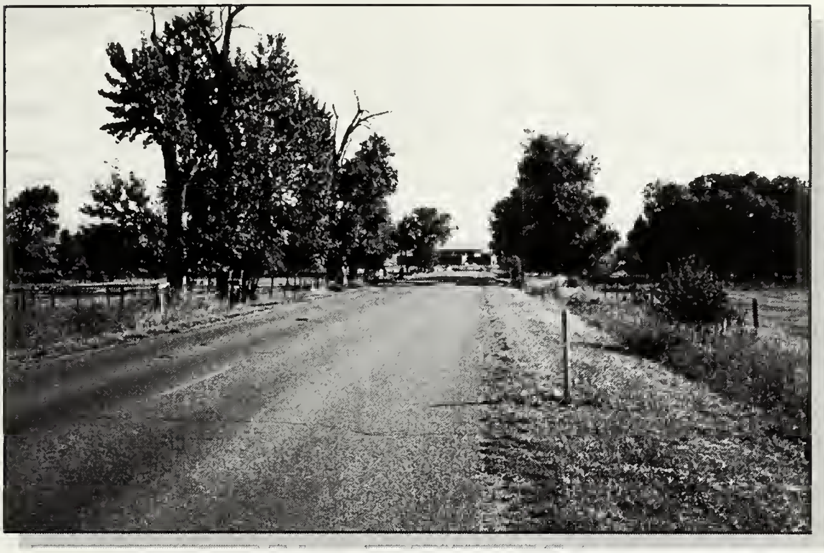


Photo 1
View from the west approach to the Prickly Pear Creek crossing. The City of Helena's Missouri River Water Treatment Plant is shown in the background.

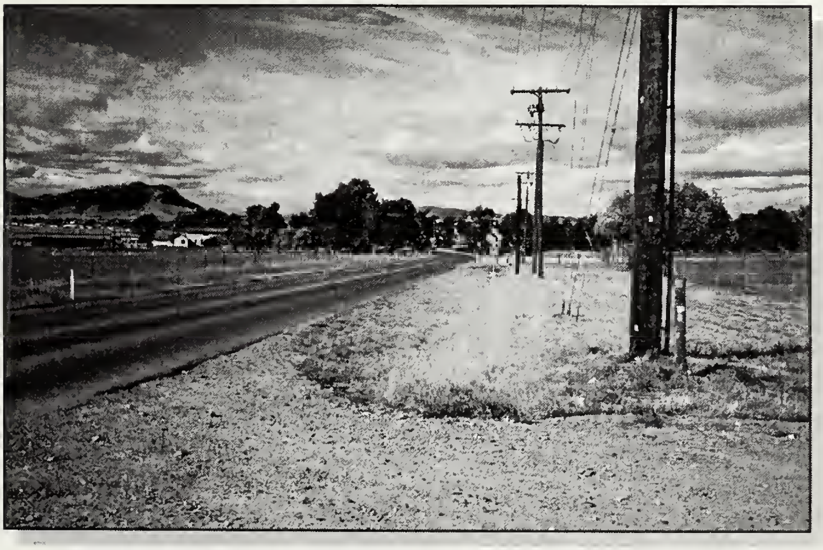


Photo 2
Looking westerly along Secondary Highway 430 from the east end of the project.

II. PURPOSE and NEED for ACTION

A. Introduction

The fundamental purpose of this project is to improve the safety of Secondary Highway 430 for users of the facility. Historically, a disproportionately high number of motor vehicle accidents have occurred on the section of Secondary Highway 430 east of its intersection with York Road to just east of the Prickly Pear Creek crossing. In response, traffic safety improvement projects have been implemented on several past occasions. The most recent of these safety projects, constructed in 1993, provided interim improvements by installing enlarged curve warning signs, advisory speed plates for curves, chevron warning signs, and flashing lights at the bridge over Prickly Pear Creek. These projects have improved traffic safety but have not addressed fundamental problems with the roadway's horizontal and vertical alignment.

The route's accident history, use, and physical deficiencies are discussed in the following sections. These factors indicate the need to implement the traffic safety improvements proposed with this project.

B. Traffic Safety

This project has been identified for MDT's program of safety projects based upon the high number of accidents that have been recorded on this portion of Secondary Highway 430. Accident records show that a total of 51 accidents occurred on the existing roadway between km 0.5 and km 1.4 (M.P. 0.3 and M.P. 0.9) during the five-year period beginning on January 1, 1990 and ending on December 31, 1994. The corresponding accident rate for this section of Secondary Highway 430 during the 1990-1994 period was 10.69 accidents per million vehicle miles of travel (ACC/MVMT). This rate is nearly 6.5 times higher than the statewide average accident rate of 1.66 ACC/MVMT for other Secondary Highways in Montana.

The corresponding severity rate for the project area during the 1990-1994 period was 1.57 as compared to the statewide average of 1.54 for other Secondary Routes. The severity rate is commonly used by MDT as a measure of the overall severity of accidents on a particular road segment or route based on the number and degree of injuries recorded during a given period.

An analysis of the characteristics of accidents during the 1990-1994 period showed the variation from average occurrences on Secondary roads in Montana are as follows:

- 83% off-road accidents vs. 54.5% statewide;
- 65% fixed-object collision accidents vs. 29.4% statewide;
- 43% collision with fence accidents vs. 11% statewide;
- 28% collision with guardrail accidents vs. 3% statewide; and
- 34.3% icy, snowy, or slushy road accidents vs. 24.3% statewide.

Overall, traffic safety will be enhanced by this project through the provision of an improved alignment, flatter slopes adjacent to the road, improved sight distance, and a wider road surface. The ride characteristics and skid resistance of the road surface will be improved by this project.

C. Transportation Demand

This section of Secondary Highway 430 is a heavily used urban-suburban route which provides direct access to and from the City of Helena and outlying areas of the Helena Valley. According to the ***Helena Area Transportation Plan 1993 Update***, this route is classified according to its function as a "minor arterial" within the City of Helena and as a "major collector" within the rural area of the Helena Valley.

Existing traffic volume data for the route was reviewed and used to estimate current and future traffic volumes for the project area. Design traffic data for this section of Secondary Highway 430 is summarized below.

1996 Average Daily Traffic = 3,770 vehicles per day
2016 Average Daily Traffic = 7,500 vehicles per day
Design Hourly Volume (DHV) = 1,870 vehicles
Directional Factor (D) = 55-45%
Trucks = 3.8%
All Trucks = 28.8%
18 Kip EAL's* = Flexible 72.10 (Daily)

* EAL's are Equivalent Axle Loads

The improvement of this route was identified as a recommended major network improvement project in the ***Helena Area Transportation Plan 1993 Update.*** The community transportation plan recommended widening Canyon Ferry Road to at least 9.8 meters (32 feet) from its intersection with York Road to Lake Helena Drive. The project was not assigned a priority for implementation in the plan.

D. Roadway Deficiencies

Design standards recommended for the reconstruction of this route are based on the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' ***A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*** (1990 Edition) and on MDT's ***Montana Road Design Manual*** (1994). According to MDT's geometric design criteria for urban minor arterials and rural major collectors, the appropriate design speed for this road is 100 km/h (60 mph). Based on this design speed and the route's functional classification, the existing road is deficient in its width and has substandard horizontal and vertical curves.

The existing road and the bridge over Prickly Pear Creek are only 7.3 meters (24 feet) wide. According to MDT's geometric design standards, the road should accommodate two 3.6 meter (12 feet) wide driving lanes and have paved shoulders that are 1.8 meters (5 feet) to 2.4 meters

(8 feet) wide. This project will provide a new roadway and bridge with a paved surface width of 12.0 meters (40 feet) which meets MDT's desired geometric standard for road width.

The current horizontal alignment does not meet standards for 100 km/h at km 0.64 and km 1.61 (M.P. 0.4 and M.P. 1.0). These horizontal curves have existing radii of only 248 meters (813 feet) and 222 meters (728 feet), well below the minimum radii for horizontal curves at this design speed of 395 meters (1,296 feet). The existing vertical alignment does not meet geometric standards for 100 km/h at km 0.64 and has steep slopes adjacent to the road. The proposed action will eliminate substandard horizontal and vertical curves and flatten roadsides to 6:1 slopes. This means that the roadside would be graded so that the slope decreases in vertical height by one unit for every six units of horizontal distance away from the road.

PLATES 3 and 4 show the existing road and bridge and highlight several deficiencies associated with the present facility.

E. Social Demands or Economic Development

Secondary Highway 430 serves as one of the major routes used by residents commuting between homes located in the eastern portion of the Helena Valley and work or other destinations in the City of Helena. The importance of this road as a commuter route has increased over the years as rural residential development in outlying areas of the valley has continued. During much of the year, this route also receives significant use by recreational traffic heading to sites along Canyon Ferry Reservoir and the Missouri River and within the Helena National Forest. Agriculture is still the dominant land use in much of the Helena Valley and Secondary Highway 430 serves as an important "farm-to-market" road for many agricultural operations.

The Helena area has experienced and should continue to see steady residential and commercial growth. As development continues in the Helena Valley, the importance of this route in the overall transportation system will increase. Improvements to the route are necessary to be responsive to the demands (and impacts) of this growth. Current land use planning policies of the County encourage new development to locate in areas like the project corridor that already have city and county services or that are close to municipal services.

F. Purpose of the Proposed Action

Based on the needs for reconstructing Secondary Highway 430 discussed above, the purpose of the proposed action is to provide for the safe and efficient movement of traffic. To accomplish this fundamental purpose, the proposed action must:

- incorporate physical characteristics designed to increase the safety, comfort, and convenience of the traveling public on this section of Secondary Highway 430;
- provide a horizontal and vertical alignment that satisfy MDT's geometric standards for a 100 km/hr design speed; and
- meet MDT's geometric design standards for road width.

Plate 3:
Existing Roadway Deficiencies

Photo 1
Looking westerly at the curve near km 0.64 (M.P. 0.4) which does not meet horizontal or vertical alignment standards for a 100 km/h design speed.

Photo 2
Looking easterly at the alignment of Secondary Highway 430 from km 0.5 (M.P. 0.3). The existing facility does not meet MDT geometric standards for road width.

Plate 4:
Existing Roadway Deficiencies

Photo 1
The existing bridge and roadway have paved surfaces 7.3 meters (24 feet) wide. MDT geometric standards call for a 12.0 meter (40 feet) wide paved surface.

Photo 2
Looking westerly at the curve at near km 1.61 (M.P. 1.0) which does not meet horizontal alignment standards for a 100 km/h design speed.

III. ALTERNATIVES

A. Introduction

Montana highway and bridge projects are designed to meet or exceed the minimum geometric standards for bridges and highways. These recommended standards are based on policies and design guidelines established by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Since MDT is acting on behalf of, and in the best interest of the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County, this project was developed to meet MDT's geometric design standards. Considering the deficiencies of the existing bridge and roadway, substantial upgrading is required to meet geometric standards for Secondary Highway 430 and the bridge over Prickly Pear Creek.

Alternatives for this proposed action are identified and examined in this Part. The following text discusses the alternatives initially considered for the proposed action, identifies a Preferred Alternative, and discloses why one alternative is preferred to the others considered for this proposed action.

B. Alternatives Considered

Alternatives initially considered for the proposed action include the No Build Alternative and three build alternatives (or action alternatives) that address identified safety problems in the corridor to various degrees. These alternatives are briefly described below.

1. The No Build Alternative

The No Build alternative (also known as the "do nothing" alternative) involves taking no action. This alternative would not improve the horizontal or vertical alignment of Secondary Highway 430 and would not realign or widen the existing Prickly Pear Creek bridge within the project area. These facilities would receive maintenance and repairs as needed (and as economically feasible) to maintain them for continued public use. This alternative has essentially been in effect since work on this safety improvement project was authorized by the FHWA in 1993.

There are no direct costs associated with this alternative and no new impacts would occur on the surrounding environment. There would be no impacts on adjacent residential lands or agricultural properties or change in access due to the acquisition of new right-of-way and realignment of the roadway. There would be no loss of habitat for wildlife adjacent to Prickly Pear Creek or changes to the visual appearance of the project area.

2. Build Alternatives

Three build alternatives were considered for this safety project which involve various levels of construction within the project corridor. The build alternatives considered range from providing a new bridge and approaches at the site of the existing crossing to reconstructing 2.4 km of

Secondary Highway 430 on an entirely new alignment. For convenient reference, the build alternatives were identified as follows:

Alternative A	Build a New Bridge and Flatten the Curve at the Crossing
Alternative B	Build a New Bridge and Reconstruct the Curves on the West Approach to the Prickly Pear Creek Crossing
Alternative C	Build the Bridge and Road on an Entirely New Alignment

FIGURE 2 shows the build alternatives in relation to the existing highway and bridge. All build alternatives (Alternatives A through C) would construct a new bridge deck and road with 12.0 meter (40-foot) wide paved surfaces and be designed to meet geometric standards for a 100 km/h design speed. The new road surface would accommodate two 3.6 meter (12-foot) wide travel lanes and two 2.5 meter (8-foot) wide shoulders. A more complete description of the build alternatives is presented below.

a) Alternative A - Build a New Bridge and Flatten the Curve at the Crossing

This alternative involves constructing a new bridge over Prickly Pear Creek slightly upstream from the existing structure and rebuilding the west approach to the crossing. The work would generally occur along the same alignment as the existing roadway however the curve on the west crossing would be flattened. This alternative would require reconstruction of about 0.55 km (0.34 miles) of the existing route.

This alternative would improve traffic safety conditions in the vicinity of the Prickly Pear Creek crossing by providing a wider bridge deck and roadway surface. The environmental impacts of Alternative A would generally be confined to the existing roadway corridor and only minor amounts of new right-of-way would be needed for construction of the alternative.

b) Alternative B - Build a New Bridge and Reconstruct the Curves on the West Approach to the Prickly Pear Creek Crossing

This alternative would construct a new bridge over Prickly Pear Creek downstream from the existing bridge and rebuild the two horizontal curves west of the structure. Alternative B would provide a wider bridge on a tangent (straight) alignment located some 23 to 30 meters (75 to 100 feet) downstream from the existing structure and improve the horizontal and vertical alignment in curves at km 0.64 (M.P. 0.4) and km 1.61 (M.P. 1.0). Curve flattening at these locations would substantially improve sight distances for drivers making the roadway safer. Alternative B would reconstruct an estimated 1.31 km (0.81 miles) of the Secondary Highway 430.

c) Alternative C - Build the Bridge and Road on an Entirely New Alignment

This alternative involves construction of Secondary Highway 430 along the east-west section line

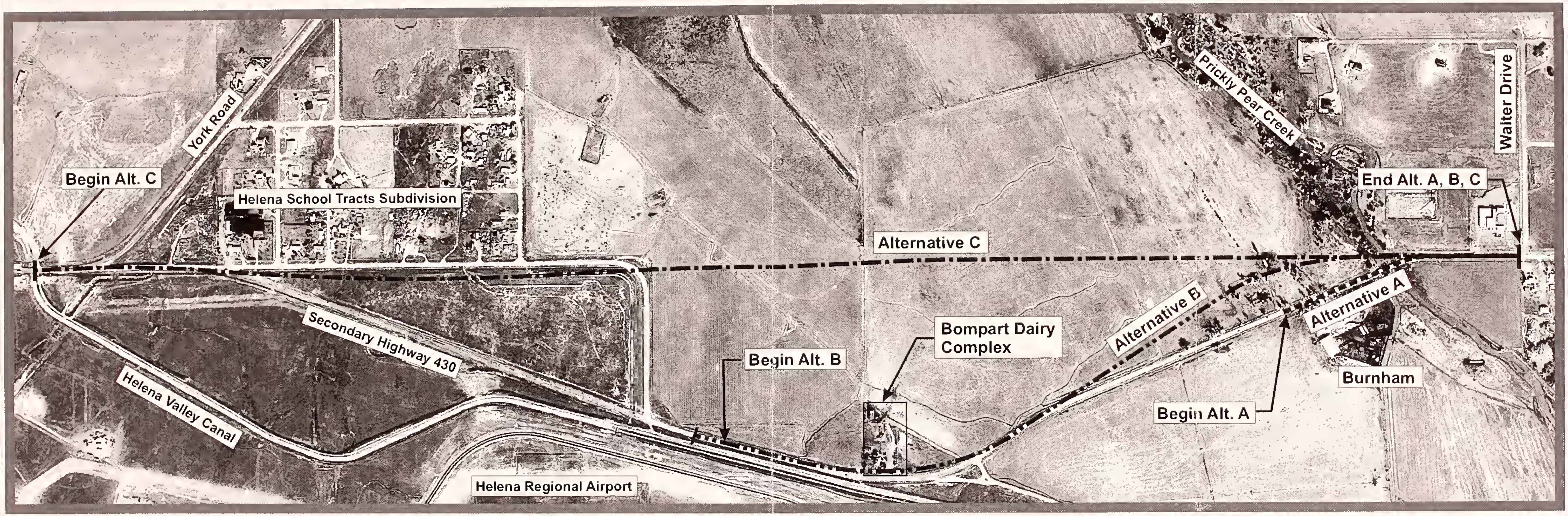


Photo Date: 4/8/96

Figure 2
Build Alternatives Considered
One Mile East of Helena (Canyon Ferry Road)

that exists between Sections 15, 16, 21, and 22. The road and bridge would be constructed along an entirely new alignment to the north of the existing highway. The new bridge over Prickly Pear Creek would be located on a tangent alignment about 23 to 30 meters (75 to 100 feet) downstream from the existing crossing. Approximately 2.4 km (1.5 miles) of new roadway would be built with Alternative C. Improvements to the intersection of York Road and Canyon Ferry Road at the west end of this project would be included with the implementation of this alternative. These improvements are likely to include reconfiguration of the intersection, lighting, and channelization for through and turning traffic.

C. Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration

The alternatives identified in this section were considered but not advanced for this proposed action. The reasons that the alternatives were eliminated from consideration are also clearly identified. The primary factors used to determine if an alternative should no longer be considered for this proposed action were:

- Does the alternative meet the purpose and need specified in Part II of the Environmental Assessment? and

- Does the alternative result in adverse environmental impacts?

1. Alternative A

Alternative A is not considered a reasonable alternative because it does nothing to address the substandard horizontal and vertical alignment conditions that exist on Secondary Highway 430 at km 0.64 (M.P. 0.4). Although improvements in horizontal alignment would be made on the approaches to the new Prickly Pear Creek bridge, the crossing would still be located within a curve. Additionally, this alternative would widen the highway only in the vicinity of new bridge. The remainder of Secondary Highway 430 in the project corridor would continue to have a substandard road width according to MDT's geometric design standards.

Based on the accident investigations completed by MDT, problems exist throughout the project corridor. Improving the Prickly Pear Creek crossing would only partially address the traffic safety concerns that exist on a short section of the route within the project corridor.

2. Alternative B

Alternative B is not considered reasonable due to its substantial Section 106 impacts and its potentially adverse impacts on the Bompart residence located north of the highway near km 0.64 (M.P. 0.4). The proposed curve flattening between km 0.00 and km 0.64 (M.P. 0.0 and M.P. 0.4) would encroach on the boundaries of the Bompart Dairy Complex, a cultural property determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This property is an important cultural site due to its association with the local dairy industry and the integrity of historic-age buildings on the site. Encroachment by the new road would produce an adverse effect on this NRHP-eligible property. The location of the Bompart Dairy Complex is shown on **FIGURE 2**.

Curve flattening in the vicinity of the Bompart residence could require a relocation of the residents of the property. Horizontal alignments considered for the curve indicate a need for substantial amounts of new right-of-way from the property. Rebuilding the curve along a less severe horizontal alignment would encroach on at least one outbuilding and would shift Secondary Highway 430 substantially closer to the residence on the property. Other impacts (noise, loss of vegetation, and effects on adjoining agricultural land) could be expected due to the change in alignment near the Bompart residence.

D. Viable Alternatives

This section identifies and discusses the alternatives which will be analyzed in more detail in subsequent Parts of the Environmental Assessment. The alternatives to be evaluated further in this document include the No Build Alternative and Alternative C (Build the Bridge and Road on a New Alignment).

1. No Build Alternative

The No Build is a viable alternative that must be examined further in the Environmental Assessment. The No Build would not change the 7.3 meter (24 feet) wide highway or bridge that exists within the project corridor. The alternative assumes that current safety and maintenance practices would continue within the project area.

2. Alternative C

Alternative C is the only build alternative being analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. As indicated previously in this Part, Alternative C would build a new bridge and about 2.4 km (1.5 miles) of new roadway between the York Road intersection and the project's end east of Prickly Pear Creek. The new road and bridge would be constructed north of the existing highway on a nearly tangent east-west alignment.

E. Preferred Alternative

1. Reasons for Selecting the Preferred Alternative

Alternative C has been selected as the Preferred Alternative for the proposed action. This decision was based on fact that this alternative will totally eliminate the substandard horizontal and vertical curves within the project corridor and provide a wider bridge deck and a wider road on the east and west approaches to the Prickly Pear Creek crossing. The proposed alignment of Alternative C will provide a new bridge on a tangent alignment and substantially improve sight distance making the facility safer for its users. The east-west tangent alignment of the new road would be consistent with other portions of the route which traverses most of the Helena Valley.

The "wye" intersection Custer Avenue/Canyon Ferry Road/York Road will be improved with the Preferred Alternative. Improvements to this intersection have been contemplated by the City of Helena for many years due to its configuration and past accident history. The most recent transportation plan for the area, the ***Helena Transportation Plan 1993 Update,*** identified the need for altering the alignment of this intersection. Design plans call for the intersection to be reconstructed from a "wye"to a "tee" configuration with through traffic on Canyon Ferry Road given preference as the predominant vehicle movement. Traffic approaching the new intersection on York Road would be required to stop at the intersection before turning right or left. Presently, westbound traffic on Canyon Ferry Road is required to stop.

At this time, reconstruction plans for the Canyon Ferry Road/York Road intersection have not been prepared. However, it is anticipated that the new intersection would be lighted and be channelized to provide separate Lanes for through and turning traffic. Further studies must be completed to determine if signalization is warranted at the intersection. The recommended configuration for the intersection will be determined by MDT's traffic engineers.

The Preferred Alternative also avoids impacts to the Bompart Dairy Complex, a NRHP-eligible site, located north of the existing highway near km 0.64 (M.P. 0.4). The wider roadway (and shoulder area) associated with the Preferred Alternative will improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling through the project area since the present facility lacks sufficient shoulder area. Alternative C also allows for the continued use of the existing bridge and roadway during the time of construction which translates into cost savings for traffic control.

Alternative C was preferred because the No Build Alternative does not satisfy the stated purpose and need for the proposed improvement project. The existing alignment of this section of Secondary Highway 430 has horizontal and vertical curves that are not consistent with MDT's geometric design standards for Secondary Highways. The surfaces of the existing road and bridge are narrow and do not conform with MDT's geometric design standards for road width. The City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County would be faced with the continuing traffic safety liabilities and maintenance associated with the narrow road and bridge.

Conditions related to the No Build alternative provide the basis for establishing the Purpose and Need for this proposed improvement as stated in Part II of this document. Part II clearly indicates that the No Build alternative does not meet the traveling public's needs in terms of traffic safety and adherence to geometric design standards for Secondary Highways in Montana.

2. Cost Estimate for the Preferred Alternative

A preliminary alignment for the Preferred Alternative prepared by MDT served as a basis for estimating the cost of the proposal. **FIGURE 3** shows the proposed centerline and the profile of the preliminary alignment in more detail. This preliminary alignment, along with assumptions about right-of-way needs and the design and construction of the new bridge and its approaches, were used to estimate the costs of the Preferred Alternative.

TABLE 1 presents the estimated costs of the Preferred Alternative for this project.

TABLE 1: Estimated Costs for the Preferred Alternative *
STPHS 430-1 (2) 1 - One Mile East of Helena

Cost Item	Estimated Cost
Road Construction	$1,130,000
Bridge Construction	$175,000
Right-of-Way	$124,800
Relocation Costs	$0
Detour, Temporary Bridge & Approaches	$0
SUBTOTAL	$1,429,800
10% Contingency	$142,980
15% Engineering	$214,470
TOTAL	**$1,787,250**

* Alternative C - Build the Bridge and Road on an Entirely New Alignment has been identified as the Preferred Alternative for this Proposed Action.

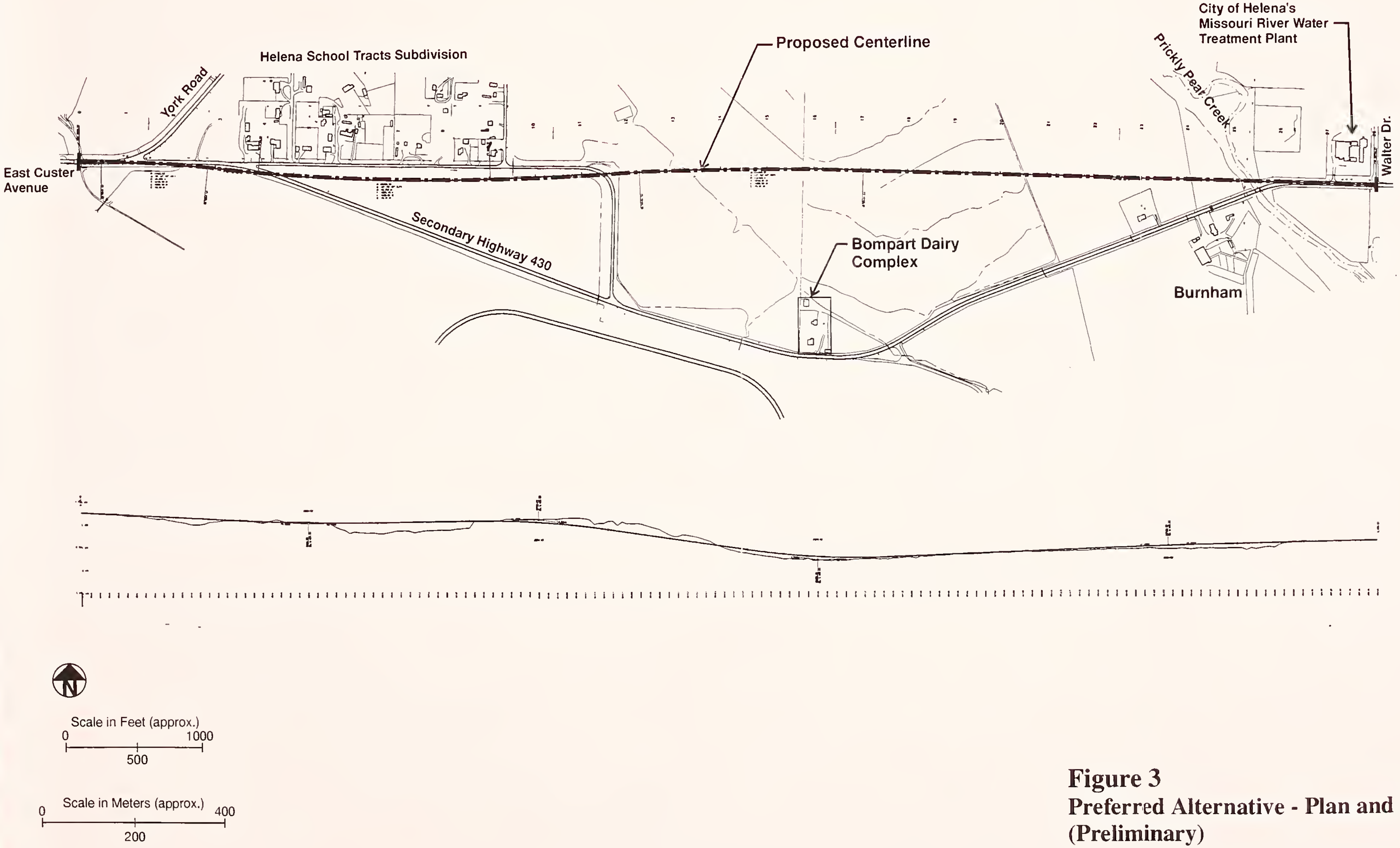


Figure 3
Preferred Alternative - Plan and Profile (Preliminary)

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT and ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Introduction

A review of the social, economic, and environmental factors and resources known to be affected by the proposed project on Secondary Highway 430 (Canyon Ferry Road) east of Helena were completed during the preparation of the Environmental Assessment. This review involved cooperation between MDT, Federal and state agencies, officials from Lewis and Clark County and the City of Helena, and the public. Few urban impacts were found in the study area due to its predominantly rural nature and the relatively limited scope of this proposed project. Some impacts were not found in the study area and other impacts were so minor that detailed studies were not warranted.

This Part of the Environmental Assessment discusses the potential consequences of implementing the Preferred Alternative and of taking no action. Only the impacts with a reasonable possibility for individual or cumulative impacts are assessed in this Part. Where appropriate, measures to mitigate the environmental impacts of this project are discussed at the end of each section.

Contacts with federal and state agencies, local government, and the public during the development of this project helped identify issues important to this proposed action. These issues are highlighted below:

- Direct and indirect effects on agricultural lands
- Effects on access from adjacent properties
- Provisions for pedestrians/bicyclists
- Improvement of Canyon Ferry Road/York Road intersection
- Noise impacts on residences in the Helena School Tracts subdivision
- Right-of-way acquisition and impacts

These and other relevant issues identified through coordination with agencies are discussed in the following sections.

B. Environmental Impacts

1. Land Use Impacts

The majority of project area is generally irrigated agricultural land with alfalfa hay as the primary crop. Residential uses and a small nursery and landscaping business exist in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision, an older subdivision located east of the Custer Avenue/Canyon Ferry Road/York Road intersection. There are also several residences on rural ranch properties within the project corridor. The City of Helena`s Missouri River Water Treatment Plant is located at the east end of the project area. Helena Regional Airport lands lie immediately south of the existing highway.

The 1994 Helena Comprehensive Plan designates land use within the City of Helena in the western portion of the project corridor as "Industrial Commercial." These lands generally fall within the corresponding zoning for the existing "Public Lands and Institutions District" and "Airport District" in this part of the city. The remaining area outside of the city limits is designated by the Helena Comprehensive Plan as "Medium-High Residential Density."

According to the Lewis and Clark County Planning Office, there are no formal land use designations for lands in the project area that fall outside the city limits of Helena. The County's land use plan is a "policy-type" plan which is intended to encourage future growth in areas near existing city or county services and to encourage the continuation of agricultural operations in the Helena Valley. With the exception of a small area northeast of the existing bridge over Prickly Pear Creek, lands are not zoned. Special Zoning District No. 31 exists to the north and east of Walters Drive, near the City of Helena's Missouri River Water Treatment Plant. Lands in this district are zoned for low-density residential uses and have a minimum lot size of 2.0± hectares (5 acres).

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Although the Preferred Alternative would pass through previously undeveloped agricultural lands, no substantial impacts in land uses within the project corridor are anticipated. The improvements associated with the proposed action are not expected to produce land use changes or significantly alter the rate at which lands in the area are developed since large tracts adjacent to the project contain long standing agricultural operations and airport uses. The proposed alignment of the Preferred Alternative would place Secondary Highway 430 closer to the residences and a business in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision. This would result in a change in access to properties in the subdivision. Instead of entering or leaving the area on a low-volume local road, residents and customers of the nursery/landscaping business would access properties in the subdivision directly from Secondary Highway 430.

Final decisions about access provisions and approach locations have not yet been made by MDT road designers. However, the length of existing road replaced by the Preferred Alternative would be removed from the Secondary system. Portions of the old road must be perpetuated for access to existing residential properties and agricultural lands in the project corridor. Ownership of the "abandoned" sections of road would ultimately revert to adjacent landowners at the completion of the proposed action and the maintenance of the roadway would become their responsibility. A single approach would probably be provided for access to residences in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision. The approach would connect with the existing gravel road (East Custer Avenue) used to access these properties. A direct access from the new highway would likely be provided for the nursery/landscaping business at the west end of the subdivision.

The proximity of the new road to residences in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision and increasing traffic volumes on Secondary Highway 430 could indirectly make the area less desirable for residential uses. This could contribute to the eventual conversion of lands in the subdivision from residential to highway commercial uses assuming such changes are acceptable to the City and/or County.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would have no impact on the existing land uses in the corridor. Taking no action to improve Secondary Highway 430 would not inhibit future development in the project area.

2. Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocations

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Construction of the Preferred Alternative would require an estimated 13.7 hectares (34.0 acres) of new right-of-way. The new right-of-way would be acquired from residential lots in the subdivision near the west end of the project, from properties near the new creek crossing, and from grazing and cropland within the project corridor. The new road would be constructed along the existing alignment of East Custer Avenue at the west end of the project and could affect some improvements on parcels in the subdivision. However, MDT road designers have shifted the centerline of the new road to the south to minimize impacts on residents of the Helena School Tracts Subdivision. No relocations of residents or businesses are anticipated with the implementation of this alternative.

PLATE 5 shows the Helena School Tracts Subdivision and the general location for the new road.

Utilities present within the project corridor for the Preferred Alternative include a water transmission line from the City's Missouri River Water Treatment to Helena, the Yellowstone Pipeline, and overhead and buried utilities in the vicinity of the Prickly Pear Creek crossing. The water transmission line exists along the north side of Custer Avenue and generally parallels the proposed alignment of the Preferred Alternative. The Yellowstone Pipeline, which transports petroleum products, exists near the west end of project corridor. The Preferred Alternative would be designed to avoid conflicts with major underground utilities in the project corridor. However, some relocations of overhead utilities are anticipated at the west end of the project and near the Prickly Pear Creek crossing.

All lands needed for right-of-way from private ownerships on this proposed project will be acquired by MDT in accordance with both the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Act* of 1970 (**P.L. 91-646**) and the *Uniform Relocation Act Amendments* of 1987 (**P.L. 100-17**). Compensation for right-of-way acquisitions will be made at "fair market value" for the "highest and best use" of the land. The right-of-way acquired for this project will be conveyed to Lewis and Clark County.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not require any additional right-of-way or result in the relocation of residents or businesses in the project area.

3. Impacts on Agricultural Lands

a) Farmland Impacts

The Helena Office of the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) was contacted in February, 1996 about the presence of prime or unique farmland and farmland of statewide and/or local importance in the project area. A resource conservationist from the NRCS indicated that two soils in the project corridor, Meadowcreek-Fairway loam and Attewan loam, are designated as prime farmland (if irrigated). Another soil in the project area, Musselshell-Crago complex, was identified as a soil of local importance. Other soils crossed by the proposed action do not meet the criteria for prime, unique, or statewide and/or locally important farmland.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - The impacts of the proposed action on prime or important farmlands in the project corridor must be addressed to ensure compliance with the Farmland Policy Protection Act (FPPA - **7 U.S.C. 4201**, et seq.) A Farmland Conservation Impact Rating form (#AD-1006) was processed for this project in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act. The *Total Points* for this project's Site Assessment Criteria are less than 160 points. Therefore, under 7 CFR 658.4(c), no additional consideration for protection is necessary. The completed form was not submitted to the NRCS but is included in APPENDIX B.

Based on the information provided by NRCS and the right-of-way requirements for the Preferred Alternative, the total area of important farmland and prime farmland (if irrigated) affected by the proposed action was calculated. Of importance to the FPPA are the areas of direct conversion of farmland. Direct conversions occur when farmland is lost to right-of-way. Calculations show that the Preferred Alternative will directly convert 8.60 hectares (21.25± acres) of farmland. Approximately half of the farmland affected by the proposed action is considered prime farmland (if irrigated). **PLATE 5** shows the typical farmland areas affected by the Preferred Alternative.

The FPPA considers indirect conversions of farmland to include the areas remaining in a tract of land partially taken for right-of-way which (1) would no longer be capable of being farmed due to access restrictions; or (2) would likely be converted to a non-farm use due to the accessibility of the highway. Based on these considerations, it was determined that the Preferred Alternative would not cause indirect conversions of farmland.

The Preferred Alternative, together with other ongoing and future development activities on rural lands outside the City of Helena, will continue to convert minor amounts of farmland to other uses. Over time, these cumulative conversions could represent a major loss of important farmland in the county.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative - The No Action Alternative would not result in any direct or indirect conversions of farmland.

Plate 5:
Helena School Tracts Subdivision and Affected Farmland

Photo 1
The Helena School Tracts Subdivision, near the Canyon Ferry Road/ York Road intersection, lies to the north of the proposed alignment of the Preferred Alternative.

Photo 2
The proposed alignment of the Preferred Alternative would cross agricultural areas and lands classified as prime farmland (if irrigated) by the NRCS.

b) Impacts on Irrigation Facilities

Water for irrigation in the project area is provided by the Helena Valley Irrigation District. There are numerous ditches and underground feeder lines with risers and sprinkler systems within the project corridor.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - This alternative would require new irrigation crossings. One crossing on Custer Avenue would be replaced or perpetuated and up to four additional crossings would be required with the proposed alignment. The construction of the Preferred Alternative may require ditch relocation outside of the new right-of-way, some of which may be for small lateral field ditches.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not impact irrigation facilities in the project area.

4. Social Impacts

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - This proposed action will not have any significant impact on the location, distribution, density or growth rate of the area's population. The proposed action will not adversely affect any social or ethnic groups and it will not isolate or divide existing residential areas. This project will not create disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low income populations (**Executive Order No. 12898**).

This alternative will provide traffic safety benefits and more efficient facility for road users through the construction of a wider roadway and bridge and the enhancement of sight distance within the corridor. These improvements are expected to result in decreases in the number of accidents within the project area. The Preferred Alternative provides a more efficient facility for road users by eliminating horizontal curves and slightly reducing the length of the route resulting in minor reductions in travel times and slight decreases in fuel consumption, vehicle wear, and vehicle emissions. The wider paved shoulders associated with the Preferred Alternative would improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists on the roadway.

The proposed action would indirectly benefit local school districts by improving the route used to transport students to area schools. Similarly, the improvement of this route may benefit the providers of emergency services by slightly reducing response times from Helena to outlying areas of the east Helena Valley.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - This alternative would not require the acquisition of land and would not displace households, businesses, or other areas used for human activities. Taking no action would not influence population growth or distribution in or near the project area.

5. Economic Impacts

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - The most apparent economic impact of this alternative is the need to acquire new right-of-way from adjacent landowners. About 13.74 hectares (34.0 acres) of additional right-of-way may need to be acquired to construct the Preferred Alternative. Right-of-way acquisition would permanently remove a minor amount of agricultural land from production and taxes paid on the land would be lost to Lewis and Clark County. This loss in property tax revenue would be expected to have a negligible effect on revenues for the County. Such losses could be offset if old right-of-way areas are conveyed to adjacent landowners and once again converted to productive agricultural land.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - This alternative would not require any new right-of-way and would not displace any residents or businesses. However, the No Build Alternative offers no relief to identified traffic safety concerns in the area. Further deterioration of highway safety conditions (likely with additional travel on the route) may contribute to increases in the incidence of traffic accidents and result in greater economic losses to users of the facility from accidents.

6. Noise

A traffic noise assessment based on field measurements of ambient noise levels and projected current and design year traffic volumes for the Secondary Highway 430 corridor was completed by MDT in February, 1995. The project area is located north of the Helena Regional Airport at the east edge of the City of Helena. Noise sensitive land uses in the project area include several isolated residences and a small residential subdivision. The Helena School Tracts Subdivision, located near the west end of the project, contains residences situated from 46 to 259 meters (150 to 850 feet) from the highway. Because the proposed action would have little effect on noise levels at isolated residences in the project corridor, MDT's noise analysis focused on potential impacts in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision.

Field measurements showed that ambient midday non-peak hour Leq(h) noise levels in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision area are about 50 dBA at a distance of 76 meters (250 feet). Leq(h) refers to equivalent, steady state sound level which, in a stated period of time (hour), contains the same acoustic energy as the time-varying sound level during the same period. The term dBA represents decibels measured with a frequency weighting corresponding to the A-scale on standard sound level meters. The "A-weighted" scale filters or removes sounds frequencies undetectable by the human ear.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - As indicated earlier, the proposed alignment of Preferred Alternative passes through a small subdivision near the beginning of the project (see **PLATE 5**). Presently, this neighborhood is relatively quiet and experiences predominantly local traffic. The Preferred Alternative would route Secondary Highway 430 along East Custer Avenue bringing the new road nearer to residences located in the subdivision.

The FHWA's Computer Noise Prediction Model was used to calculate present and design year noise levels within the Helena School Tracts Subdivision attributable to traffic on Secondary Highway 430. Three receivers in the subdivision located at various distances from the existing and proposed roadway were chosen to be representative sites for modeling purposes. Using current (1996) peak hour traffic volumes and projected design year (2016) traffic volumes, current and future noise levels were calculated for the receiver sites in the subdivision. These calculations are presented below in **TABLE 2**.

According to Federal Regulation 23 CFR 772, noise impacts occur when 1) present or design year noise levels approach or exceed the Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) for a specific Activity Category and 2) when design year noise levels substantially increase over existing levels. MDT defines approach as 1 decibel less that the NAC, and substantial increase as 10 decibels or greater. The Activity Category for all noise sensitive receivers in the project area is Activity Category B which includes picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sports areas, parks, residences, motels, hotels, churches, libraries and hospitals. The corresponding NAC for Activity Category B is 67 dBA.

TABLE 2
Calculated Noise Levels for 1996 and Design Year (2016) Traffic One Mile East of Helena

	Receiver	Distance from Centerline Meters (feet)	Noise Level Leq (h) dBA*
Present Year (1996)	1	80 (262)	59
	2	144 (472)	55
	3	180 (590)	54
Design Year (2016) Preferred Alternative	1	66 (216)	63
	2	102 (335)	60
	3	86 (282)	62

* Vehicle travel speed assumed to be 88 kph (55 mph) and 3.8% of traffic assumed to be trucks.

The noise modeling shows that residences in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision would experience an increase in noise levels with the construction of the Preferred Alternative. The data in **TABLE 2** shows that for each of the three receivers, design year noise levels associated with the Preferred Alternative would increase to 60 to 63 dBA, or 4 to 8 dBA above existing noise levels. Part of this increase in noise levels is due to the proposed alignment of Secondary Highway 430 which would bring traffic noise closer to homes, and part of the increase is due to the gradual doubling in traffic volumes over the next 20 years. However, the design year noise levels will not approach or exceed the NAC of 67 dBA, nor will noise levels increase 10 decibels or more above current levels. For these reasons, no noise mitigation is required.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative - Noise levels along the corridor are expected to increase within the foreseeable future due to the likely increase of traffic within the corridor.

7. Air Quality Impacts

This proposed project is located in an "unclassifiable"/attainment area of Montana for air quality under 40 CFR 81.327, as amended. As such, this proposed project is not covered under the U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY's (EPA's) **Final Rule** of November 24, 1993 on Air Quality conformity. Therefore, this proposed project complies with *Section 176(c)* of the *Clean Air Act* **(42 U.S.C. 7521(a))**, as amended.

Safety improvements and hazard elimination projects generally include actions whose individual and cumulative effects would be minor and would not affect regional emissions. These conclusions can be reasonably made on the basis of analyses done for many similar projects across the country. For the reasons described above, neither the Preferred Alternative nor the No Build Alternative would be expected to result in adverse air quality impacts.

8. Water Quality Impacts

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - The water quality impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative are expected to be minor since Prickly Pear Creek is de-watered in the vicinity of the highway crossing during most of the summer months. Construction will not be required in and around flowing water for the Prickly Pear Creek crossing if construction is scheduled appropriately. However, if construction is required in flowing water, design and construction procedures have been implemented by MDT to minimize water quality impacts. The water quality impacts associated with the proposed action would be short-term and construction related.

> *Clean Water Act - Section 404* - Prickly Pear Creek is below the headwaters as defined by the U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS (COE) for Section 404 purposes. The COE will determine if this proposed project qualifies for a "Nationwide" 404 permit under the provisions of 30 CFR 330. The placement of less than 153± cubic meters (200 cubic yards) of fill material into the creek below the plane of high water for the construction of replacement structures is covered by a "Nationwide" permit as minor road crossing fill under the provisions of 33 CFR 330.5. All necessary permits will be acquired prior to any relevant disturbance.
>
> Channel Modifications - Minor channel modifications would be required for the Preferred Alternative to construct inlet and outlet channels, riprap, and excavation, placement of bedding materials and riprap, and alignment of new facilities. Some new culverts may be required as a result of roadway construction. The existing bridge will remain in place with the Preferred Alternative and be used as a detour during the construction of a new bridge on Prickly Pear Creek. Due to the nature of the drainages crossed by the project, channel modifications would be minor in scope and have limited impacts.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative - The No Action Alternative would not impact water quality in the project area since no lands would be disturbed and no work would be necessary within the channel of Prickly Pear Creek.

9. Erosion Control and Seeding

Construction of highway cuts and embankments, if left unattended, results in temporary erosion and siltation of the adjacent water bodies. The replacement of the bridge, development of new fill areas at the bridge approaches, and the construction of areas of new roadway will cause temporary soil surface disturbances and short-term siltation into the Prickly Pear Creek. Temporary erosion control measures like silt fences, will be employed to minimize and control siltation. Work in the creek will be allowed only during those periods specified by regulatory resource management agencies (i.e., the MDFWP).

An Erosion Control Plan will be submitted to the MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY's (MDEQ's) Permitting and Compliance Division in accordance with their Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Regulations (ARM 16.20.1314) for this proposed project. Best Management Practices will be used in the design of this Plan using Guidelines established in MDT's ***Highway Construction Standard Erosion Control Workplan***. The objective is to minimize erosion of disturbed areas during and following construction of this proposed project.

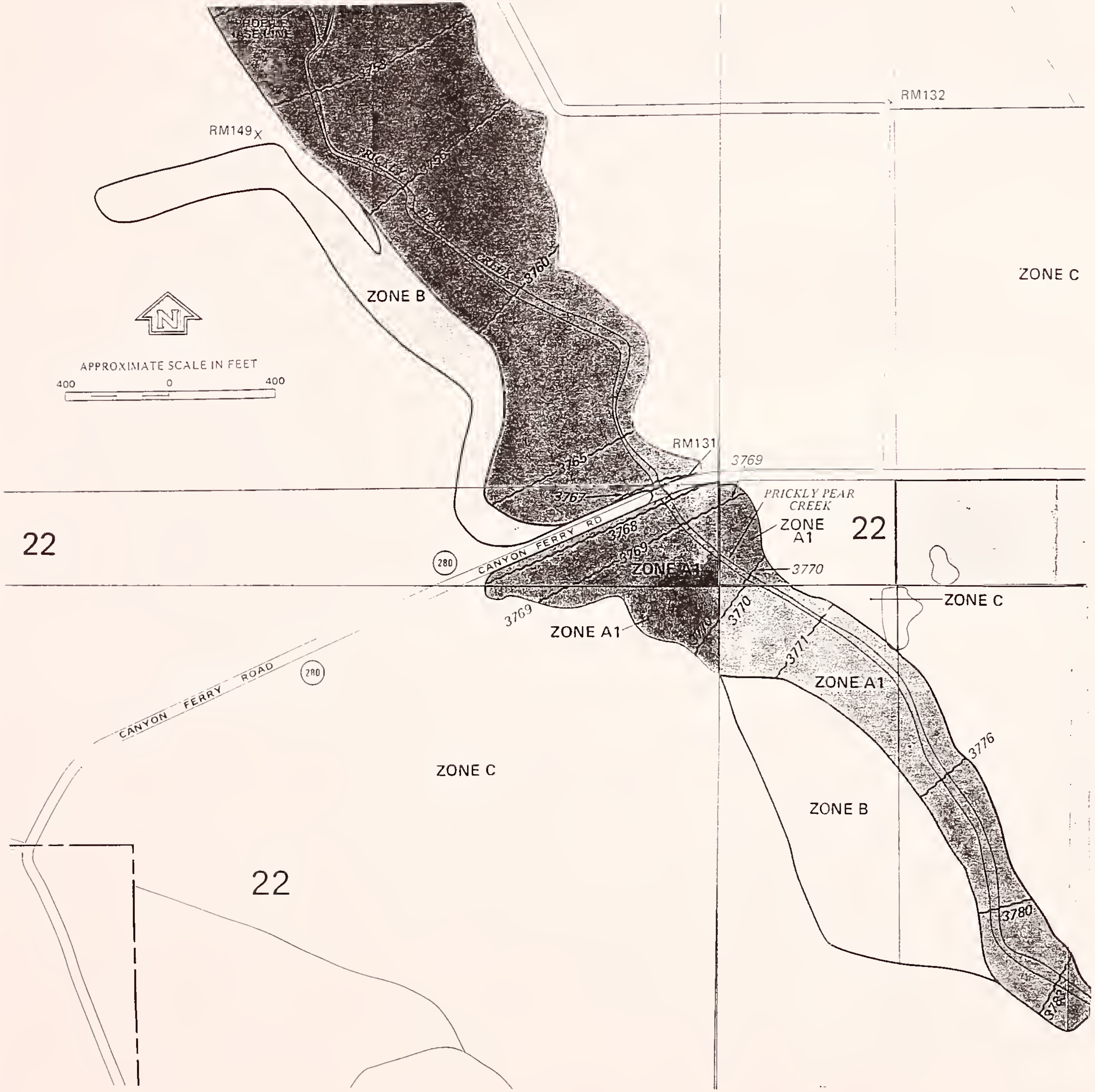
In accordance with **7-22-2152** and **60-2-208, M.C.A.**, MDT will reestablish a permanent desirable vegetation community along all areas disturbed by the proposed construction. A set of revegetation guidelines will be developed by MDT that must be followed by the contractor. These specifications will include instructions on seeding methods, dates, mix components, and the types and amounts of mulch and fertilizer. Seed mixes include a variety of species to assure that areas disturbed by construction are immediately stabilized by vegetative cover.

The Seeding Special Provisions developed for this proposed project will be forwarded to the Lewis and Clark County Weed Board for approval.

10. Floodplain Impacts

The existing highway crossing over Prickly Pear Creek is a timber structure with overflow culverts to the west. This crossing is included in a Flood Insurance Study published in 1985 by the FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) which detailed the flood history of area streams, analyzed stream hydraulics, and established elevations associated with the base floodplain. The 1985 study provided the information needed to revise and update Flood Insurance Rate Maps for unincorporated areas of the county.

FIGURE 4 shows the base floodplain in the vicinity of the Prickly Pear Creek crossing as delineated on the Floodplain Insurance Rate Maps provided by the FEMA. The "base" floodplain is the area covered by water from the 100-year flood. The 100-year flood represents a flood event that has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. There are no designated floodplains located in other portions of the project area.



KEY TO MAP

500-Year Flood Boundary	ZONE B
100-Year Flood Boundary	
Zone Designations	ZONE A1 / ZONE A5
100-Year Flood Boundary	
500-Year Flood Boundary	ZONE B
Base Flood Elevation Line With Elevation In Feet**	513
Base Flood Elevation in Feet Where Uniform Within Zone**	(EL 987)
Elevation Reference Mark	RM7×
Zone D Boundary	— — —
River Mile	•M1.5

**Referenced to the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929

EXPLANATION OF ZONE DESIGNATIONS

ZONE	EXPLANATION
A	Areas of 100-year flood; base flood elevations and flood hazard factors not determined.
A0	Areas of 100-year shallow flooding where depths are between one (1) and three (3) feet; average depths of inundation are shown, but no flood hazard factors are determined.
AH	Areas of 100-year shallow flooding where depths are between one (1) and three (3) feet; base flood elevations are shown, but no flood hazard factors are determined.
A1-A30	Areas of 100-year flood; base flood elevations and flood hazard factors determined.
A99	Areas of 100-year flood to be protected by flood protection system under construction; base flood elevations and flood hazard factors not determined.
B	Areas between limits of the 100-year flood and 500-year flood; or certain areas subject to 100-year flooding with average depths less than one (1) foot or where the contributing drainage area is less than one square mile; or areas protected by levees from the base flood. (Medium shading)
C	Areas of minimal flooding. (No shading)
D	Areas of undetermined, but possible, flood hazards.
V	Areas of 100-year coastal flood with velocity (wave action); base flood elevations and flood hazard factors not determined.
V1-V30	Areas of 100-year coastal flood with velocity (wave action); base flood elevations and flood hazard factors determined.

Figure 4

FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (Panels 1541, 1542, 1542, 1543) --9/4/85

Secondary Highway 430 (Canyon Ferry Road) at Prickly Pear Creek Crossing

According to the FEMA map, floodplains crossed by the proposed action are classified as Zone A-1 (areas of the 100-year flood based on detailed hydraulic calculations to determine flood elevations); Zone B (areas between the limits of the 100-year and 500-year floods or subject to minor flooding); and Zone C (areas of minimal flooding).

Large floods in Lewis and Clark County are typically the result of heavy rainfall combined with snowmelt, although in some areas rainfall or snowmelt alone can be the cause of flooding. Historic records show that widespread flooding occurred on most major streams in the County, including Prickly Pear Creek, during 1908, 1964, 1975, and 1981. Newspaper accounts and photographs indicate that the 1908 flood on Prickly Pear Creek was probably greater than a 100-year flood. The precipitation patterns associated with the 1981 flood were similar to those of 1908, suggesting that the 100-year flood was also exceeded in 1981. The 1964 and 1975 floods on Prickly Pear Creek near the project area were less than 100-year floods although widespread flooding and structural damage occurred in the northwestern portions of the Helena Valley.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - **Executive Order No. 11988** and FHWA's floodplain regulations (23 CFR 650, Subpart A) require that the effects of the proposed action be evaluated to determine if any of its alternatives encroach on the base floodplain. The Preferred Alternative would involve a transverse encroachment on the floodplain. However, the replacement of the structure on Prickly Pear Creek will be designed in a manner that will not increase in water surface elevations over existing conditions for the 100-year flood event. MDT standard procedures and specifications will ensure that the required transverse encroachment will be in accordance with FHWA guidelines.

PLATE 6 shows the existing Prickly Pear Creek crossing and the approximate location for the new bridge associated with the Preferred Alternative.

The proposed project would not promote or encourage development within this delineated floodplain, nor increase flood liability hazards from its construction. Therefore, this project is considered to be in compliance with **Executive Order No. 11988** and the proposed project's build alternatives meet the floodplain management criteria.

Lewis and Clark County administers the Prickly Pear Creek floodplain for FEMA, and a Floodplain Development Permit will be required for any encroachments into this floodplain related to the construction of this project.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - This alternative would have no effect on designated floodplains in the project area. There are no risks of new flooding incurred, no impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values, and no likelihood of incompatible floodplain development.

11. Wetland Impacts

A wetlands survey for this proposed project was conducted by MDT on July 19, 1996. Based on

Plate 6:
Existing Prickly Pear Creek Bridge and Proposed Crossing

Photo 1
This photo shows the existing bridge over Prickly Pear Creek.

Photo 2
The proposed alignment of the Preferred Alternative would cross Prickly Pear Creek in this approximate location.

the results of the survey, there were no wetland sites delineated on any of the proposed alignments for the build alternatives. Therefore, wetlands will not be affected by either the Preferred Alternative or the No Build Alternative.

12. Biological Resources

A Biological Resources Report was prepared for this project by MDT in September, 1996. This report evaluated the Preferred Alternative and other build alternatives for the proposed action and concluded that the impacts on biological resources were not substantially different for any of the build alternatives. The following sections discuss the impacts of the Preferred Alternative as described in the Biological Resources Report for this project.

a) Threatened/Endangered Species

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - The Biological Resources Report identifies Federally-listed Threatened/Endangered (T/E) species in the project area east of Helena. The identification of T/E species was conducted in accordance with *Section 7(a)* of the *Endangered Species Act* (**16 U.S.C. 1531-1543**). Based on coordination with the U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (USFWS), the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the endangered peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) may occur in the vicinity of this proposed project. Both species may occur as spring and fall migrants and bald eagles may occur as winter and breeding residents.

There are six bald eagle nests located within 32 km (20 miles) of the project area. The closest nest is located some 13 km (8 miles) from the project area. A peregrine falcon hack site is located about 13 km from the project area and an active peregrine falcon eyrie exists 24 km (15 miles) north of the project area in the Gates of the Mountains on the Missouri River. Due to the distances from the project area to the nest locations for these species, the proposed action would have no adverse impacts on the six bald eagle nest territories or the peregrine nesting areas. Therefore, it was determined that the Preferred Alternative is **NOT LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT** the threatened bald eagle or the endangered peregrine falcon.

Two plant species in Montana, water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and the Ute ladies- tresses orchid (*Spiranthes divulvialis*), are listed as threatened plant species by the USFWS. Water howellia is limited to aquatic habitats in northwestern Montana. Therefore, the proposed project does not fall within the expected range for the species. Ute ladies' tresses occur along low-elevation, large river floodplains and have only been found in locations east of the Continental Divide in Montana. Suitable habitat for the species does not occur within the project area. Therefore, this Preferred Alternative will have **NO EFFECT** on either water howellia or the Ute ladies' tresses orchid.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not impact T/E species.

b) Rare and Sensitive Species

In addition to species listed by the USFWS under the *Endangered Species Act*, other species have been designated as rare, sensitive, or of special concern by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) and the MDFWP. The MNHP lists two state-ranked plant species of concern, lesser rushy milkvetch (*Astragalus convallarius*) and small yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium spp. calceolus*) as occurring within 16 km (10 miles) of this project area. Each of these species has been assigned a state rank of S2, which indicates that they are considered imperiled in Montana due to a rarity of populations (6 to 20 statewide occurrences).

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Due to the conversion and grazing of native vegetation communities in the immediate project area, suitable habitat for lesser rushy milkvetch is nonexistent. Small yellow lady's-slipper occurs in bogs, damp mossy woods, seepage areas, and moist forest areas at elevations of between 3,000 and 6,200 feet. The absence of these types of habitats precludes the presence of small yellow lady's-slipper in the immediate project area.

An evaluation of the rare and sensitive plants listed by the MNHP for Lewis and Clark County showed that 5 of the 21 listed species are likely to occur in the project area based on habitat requirements. These species are wedge-leaved saltbush (*Atriplex truncata*), running fleabane (*Erigeron flagellaris*), Austin's knotweed (*Polygonum douglassi* spp. *austinae*), white-margined knotweed (*Polygonum polygaloides*), and water bulrush (*Scirpus subterminalis*). Based on habitat requirements and the lack of intact native vegetative habitats, none of these plant species are expected to occur in the project area.

The database search by the MNHP identified the presence of a great blue heron rookery at the mouth of Prickly Pear Creek. Although the species are not considered as sensitive, rookeries are worthy of protection. No impacts to the great blue heron rookery or individual birds are anticipated since the rookery is located more than 8 km (5 miles) from the project area.

Any impacts to the rare or sensitive plant and wildlife species in the project area would be minor and associated with construction and reclamation activities. No long-term negative impacts or irretrievable losses to rare and sensitive plants, wildlife or habitat are likely to occur as a result of this project. Since much of the area has already been impacted by development, the cumulative impacts of this project and other developments in the area will not result in a decline of these species or populations.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not impact any rare or sensitive species.

c) Fisheries

The MDFWP confirms that the section of Prickly Pear Creek in the project area is known to support rainbow and brown trout spawning and rearing habitat for both resident and migratory fish from Lake Helena. MDFWP has documented the presence of spawning rainbow and brown trout just upstream from the project area.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Potential impacts to fisheries could occur during work to construct the new bridge or if sediments from disturbed areas of the project were transported to the stream. Due to the use of the stream by spawning trout, spring and fall work in Prickly Pear Creek should be avoided and special care taken during such periods to minimize impacts on spawning fish. Therefore, as a condition of the MDFWP Stream Protection Act (SPA) permit for this project, no in stream construction work will occur in Prickly Pear Creek during rainbow trout spawning periods (April-June) and brown trout spawning periods (October-December). The implementation of an erosion control plan and prompt revegetation of disturbed areas will minimize or eliminate the potential for sediments to enter the creek.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not impact the fishery in Prickly Pear Creek.

d) Other Terrestrial Resources

The project area is dominated by semiarid native grasses such as western wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, blue grama, green needlegrass, and Idaho fescue. Black cottonwood and woods rose are present in the riparian zone of Prickly Pear Creek. Limited native vegetative habitat exists in the project area due to conversion of such areas to irrigated pasture. The project area also provides habitat for a wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Impacts to these wildlife species in the project area will be displacement during construction and the loss of minor amounts of habitats due to the project`s construction. This impact will be temporary and no long-term negative impacts or irretrievable losses to wildlife or habitat will occur with this project. Cumulative impacts of this project and other developments in the area will not result in a decline of wildlife species or numbers. Disturbances to native plant communities that provide habitat for wildlife will be minimized and unnecessary disturbance beyond the construction zone will be avoided.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not impact wildlife or native plant communities.

13. Cultural, Archaeological/Historical Resources

MDT performed a Cultural Resource Survey for the project corridor in December, 1994. This survey identified and recorded three historic sites within the area of potential effect for this project including: the Bompart Dairy Complex (24LC1206), the Millegan Place (24LC1207), and the Lichtward Farmstead (24LC1208). Only the Bompart Dairy Complex was found to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Montana STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) concurred with this determination in their letter dated January 5, 1995. A copy of SHPO's letter is provided in APPENDIX B.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative -The alignment proposed with the Preferred Alternative would bypass the Bompart Dairy Complex to the north and avoid impacts on the historic property. There would be no right-of-way acquisition or encroachment on the boundaries of the site with this alternative. The new roadway would be constructed along the north fence line of the property and would not interfere with the historic functions of the ranch or affect any of the qualities that make the site NRHP-eligible.

MDT prepared a Determination of Effect which considered the impacts of the Preferred Alternative on the NRHP-eligible Bompart Dairy Complex and submitted it to SHPO for review and concurrence in January, 1996. The Determination of Effect concluded that there would be **NO EFFECT** on the Bompart Dairy Complex associated with this proposed alternative. A copy of MDT's letter with SHPO's stamp of concurrence on this matter is included in APPENDIX B.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - This alternative would have no impact on historic or cultural resources.

14. Considerations Relating to Pedestrians and Bicyclists

The ***Helena Area Transportation Plan 1993 Update*** shows recommended bike routes and a desired network of cross-community trails. This network of bike routes and trails was proposed as part as a strategy for reducing vehicle miles of travel within the community and as a first step toward promoting the use of bicycles and walking as a legitimate means of transportation. Secondary Highway 430 (Canyon Ferry Road) is identified as a recommended bike route. The plan also indicated that it may be desirable for pedestrian trails to be located along Canyon Ferry Road, along Prickly Pear Creek, and along a major irrigation canal in the project area. It should be noted that the pedestrian trail system designated in the transportation plan is conceptual and intended only to identify urban-suburban travel desires for a variety of potential trail users.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - No sidewalks or separated paths for bicyclists, pedestrians, or other modes are being considered with this proposed action. However, the Preferred Alternative would provide 2.5 meter (8-foot) wide shoulders along each side of the road. Bicyclists and pedestrians would be required to use the shoulder of the new highway.

Guidelines established by the AASHTO state that shoulders used by bicyclists should be smooth, paved surfaces with minimum widths of 1.2 meters (4 feet). The provision of wider shoulders is consistent with AASHTO's guidelines for roads which require bicycles and vehicles to share facilities. The new 2.5 meter-wide road shoulders provided with this project would be a substantial improvement over the 0.3 to 0.6 meter (1 to 2 feet) shoulders currently available for use by bicyclists and pedestrians.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not change the narrow shoulder area that available for pedestrians and bicyclists on Secondary Highway 430.

15. Hazardous Substances

A review of the project area and regulatory files on hazardous waste sites and generators was performed by MDT in January, 1995. Based on this review, there are no other known sources of hazardous substances or sources of hazardous wastes in this proposed project's area.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Treated timbers removed from the existing crossing over Prickly Pear Creek are a potential source of hazardous waste on this proposed project. No hazardous waste impacts will occur since treated timbers will be disposed of by the Contractor only in licensed Class II landfills.

As a condition of the implementing the Preferred Alternative, the Contractor will be required to take precautions to minimize the effects of construction operations, and to prevent leakage or spilling of fluids from construction equipment.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - This alternative would have no impacts on hazardous waste sites, generators, or substances.

16. *Section 4(f)* of the *U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION Act*

Section 4(f) of the *U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION Act* (**49 U.S.C. 303**), as amended, provides for the protection of publicly-owned parks, recreation lands, historical sites, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges. Neither the Preferred Alternative nor the No Build Alternative would impact any public parks, public recreation sites, historic sites, or wildlife or waterfowl refuges.

Correspondence with the Parks Division of the MDFWP about the lack of *Section 4(f)* involvement is provided in APPENDIX B.

17. *Section 6(f)* of the *NATIONAL LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND Act*

Section 6(f) of the *National Land & Water Conservation Fund Act* (**16 U.S.C. 460**) requires that coordination be undertaken to determine if federal funds were used to acquire or improve any lands in the project area for recreation or water conservation purposes. The Parks Division of the MDFWP indicates that none of the lands affected by this project were developed with money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Therefore, neither the Preferred Alternative nor the No Build Alternative would impact *Section 6(f)* lands.

Correspondence from the MDFWP regarding the lack of *Section 6(f)* involvement is included in APPENDIX B.

18. Visual Impacts

The project area is situated in the south central portion of the broad Helena Valley. The Helena

Valley is bordered by the Big Belt Mountain Range to the north and east, the Elkhorn Mountain Range to the south, and peaks on the Continental Divide and the Scratchgravel Hills to the west. The terrain of the Helena Valley bottom is flat to rolling with terrain generally decreasing in elevation from the southwest to the northeast. The valley bottom is divided into numerous residential and agricultural parcels.

Within the project area, the dominant man-made features include residences with yards in a small subdivision, scattered rural residences, the Helena Regional Airport and related facilities, farms or ranches with adjacent agricultural land, irrigation facilities, and a large water treatment plant. Natural features in the project area consist primarily of native grasses, large deciduous trees along Prickly Pear Creek, and the creek itself.

Because of the nature of the Helena Valley, the viewshed (the land area seen from the project) is dominated by background landscapes (the surrounding mountains) and foreground landscapes (residential and agricultural land uses and the riparian corridor associated with Prickly Pear Creek).

The major viewer groups that see the existing facility and those who will see the completed project include residents of the Helena School Tracts Subdivision and rural homes in the immediate area, workers at the water treatment plant, and those traveling through the area (mostly local residents) on existing roads and streets.

Views from the road are seen by the users of the existing facility include commuters traveling between Helena and residences in other parts of the east Helena Valley, and travelers passing through the project area on their way to Canyon Ferry Reservoir or other dispersed recreation sites in the Helena National Forest. Occasionally, bicyclists and pedestrians are also present on or near the roadway.

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - The Preferred Alternative would not alter views of the background landscape in the project area. However, this alternative would cause notable changes to the foreground landscape of the project corridor for users of the facility. The new road would be located closer to residences in the Helena School Tracts Subdivision, curves in the road's alignment would be eliminated, and the road would be moved away from two rural residences adjacent to the existing highway. The width of the new road and bridge would be substantially greater than that of the existing facility due to its increased pavement area and expanded right-of-way and clear zone. Improvements proposed at the East Custer Avenue/Canyon Ferry Road/York Road intersection would also introduce changes to the visual environment of the project area.

The Preferred Alternative would result in short-term visual impacts during the period of construction including vegetation clearing until revegetation occurs; the stockpiling or temporary storage of excavated material, equipment, and material; and dust and debris from construction activities. These impacts should be minor since much of the construction activity would be located a considerable distance from the existing highway.

The potential visual impacts of the project will be mitigated by the construction of uniform and smooth cut and fill slopes shaped to blend with the surrounding terrain. Roadside slopes will be promptly revegetated with desirable plants to control erosion and inhibit invasion by noxious weeds.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - There would be no visual impacts associated with the No Build Alternative.

19. Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

Secondary (or indirect) impacts are reasonably foreseeable effects caused by an action but occur later in time or farther removed in distance from the project area. Secondary impacts are generally induced by the initial action and comprise a wide variety of effects such as, changes in land use, water quality, economic conditions, or population density. The secondary impacts of this proposed project are addressed in appropriate sections of this Part.

Cumulative impacts are those effects which result from the incremental consequences of an action when added to other past and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) undertakes such actions. Therefore, projects planned, under construction, or recently completed by MDT, the City of Helena, or Lewis and Clark County in the vicinity were reviewed to help assess the cumulative impacts of this project.

Known projects in the vicinity of this proposed action and an assessment of probable cumulative impacts are described below.

- Signalization of Washington Street/East Custer Avenue Intersection - The City of Helena intends to install a new traffic signal at the intersection of Washington Street and East Custer Avenue during 1997. The signal project is located about 0.4 km (0.25 miles) west of the beginning of the East Custer Avenue/Canyon Ferry Road/York Road intersection. Signalization of the intersection will enhance safety and traffic operations on East Custer Avenue.

- ***Helena Area Transportation Plan 1993 Update*** Recommended Projects - The most recent transportation plan for the Helena area listed several potential projects as recommended improvements to the local road network in the vicinity of the proposed action. These projects are identified below and their current status is briefly discussed.

  Canyon Ferry Road Improvement - The recommendation called for widening Canyon Ferry Road over a 7.7 km (4.8 mile) section between York Road and Lake Helena Drive. Neither the City of Helena nor Lewis and Clark County have undertaken efforts to advance this recommended improvement.

  York Road Improvement **- The *Helena Area Transportation Plan - 1993 Update*** shows This improvement would widen York Road between Canyon Ferry Road and the Regulating Reservoir. Neither the City of Helena nor Lewis and Clark County have undertaken efforts to advance this recommended improvement.

Custer Avenue/Frontage Road Realignment - This recommended improvement is located about 1.1 km (0.7 miles) west of the project area and would involve reconstructing a problem intersection. Local transportation officials are presently discussing options for improving the intersection but have not set a date for implementing work at this location.

Custer Avenue Interchange - This recommended improvement would construct a new interchange at I-15 and Custer Avenue. Although such an action has been discussed at various times over the last two decades, no concerted efforts to build the new interchange are underway at this time.

The cumulative effects from this project and others proposed, under construction, or recently completed by MDT and others appear to be minor. This conclusion was reached because the timing of construction activities for the proposed improvements on Secondary Highway 430 will not coincide and because the other proposed projects are located a considerable distance from the project area. Further, the implementation of other recommended transportation improvement projects in the vicinity is uncertain.

20. Construction Impacts

Impacts of the Preferred Alternative - Road and bridge construction activities associated with the Preferred Alternatives would cause temporary inconveniences to the traveling public and local residents. These disturbances could include slightly longer travel times, temporary detours near the ends of the project, and the noise and dust generated by construction equipment. These impacts can be expected to occur for less than six months after the proposed construction begins. Few disruptions to traffic would occur during construction of the new road and bridge since the existing facilities would remain in use.

The Contractor will be subject to all state and local laws to minimize construction noise by having mufflers on all equipment. Dust generated through construction activities and road use will be controlled by the required use of either water or another approved dust suppressant. All work related to the Preferred Alternative will be subject to Article 107.12 **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION** under the Montana Supplemental Specifications to the 1987 STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR ROAD AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION as adopted by the former Montana Department of Highways (MDOH) and the former Montana State Highway Commission (now known as the Montana Transportation Commission).

Traffic control plans will be prepared by MDT and included in the contract plans and specifications for this project's build alternatives. These plans may include signing provisions; weekend and holiday work period designations; timing of any anticipated road or bridge closures; limitation of work during the winter; and advance notification and advertisement of any extended road or bridge closures.

Construction of the proposed road and bridge will create jobs and the need for local goods and services resulting in short-term economic benefits to the Helena community. Completion of this project will not cause any long-term changes in the economy of the area.

Impacts of the No Build Alternative - The only construction impacts associated with this alternative would be related to the completion of maintenance activities on the existing road and bridge.

21. Permits Required

The No Action Alternative would not require permits. However, the Preferred Alternative for the proposed road and bridge construction on Secondary Highway 430 east of Helena would require the following permits to be obtained prior to any relevant disturbances:

- *Section 3(a)* Authorization/*124SPA* - This proposed project will be in compliance with the provisions of both Water Quality for *Section 3(a)* authorizations under **75-5-401 (2) M.C.A.** and Stream Protection under (**87-5-501** through **509 M.C.A.**, inclusive).

    A ***124SPA*** Stream Protection Permit is required by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MDFWP).

  All work will also be in accordance with the *Water Quality Act of 1987* (**P.L. 100-4**), as amended.

- *Section 402* Permit - This proposed project will require a *Clean Water Act* **(33 U.S.C. 1251 - 1376)** - *Section 402*/Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit from the MDEQ Permitting and Compliance Division.

- *Section 404* Permit - A *Clean Water Act* **(33 U.S.C. 1251 - 1376)** - *Section 404* permit from the (COE) will be required for placing fill in wetlands or for the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with bridge and pier construction or bank stabilization at the Prickly Pear Creek crossing. The COE will determine if this proposed project qualifies for a "Nationwide" 404 permit under the provisions of 30 CFR 330. The proposed project falls under the provisions of a "Nationwide" permit for minor road crossing fill under 33 CFR 330.5.

- Floodplain Development Permit - A FEMA floodplain development permit, administered by Lewis and Clark County, will be required for work within the delineated 100-year floodplain of Prickly Pear Creek.

V. COORDINATION with OTHERS

A. Agency Coordination

The following agencies and parties were consulted during the development of this Environmental Assessment:

- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Parks Division)
- Montana State Historic Preservation Office
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (Water Resources Division)
- Natural Heritage Program, Montana State Library
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Highway Administration (Montana Division Office)
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (Area Conservationist)
- U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers
- Lewis and Clark County Planning Office
- City of Helena Planning Office

B. Public Involvement

A public informational meeting about this project was held on April 20, 1995 at 7:00 p.m. at the MDT Auditorium in Helena. The primary purpose of the meeting was to update the public on the status of the project and identify alternatives under consideration for the proposed bridge replacement project. The public meeting was attended by about 15 persons.

The major comments heard at the meeting related to the following issues:

- The Preferred Alternative's potential to cause traffic and noise impacts for residents of the subdivision near the west end of the project area;

- the potential for safety problems at the east and west ends of the project where the proposed wider road would transition to meet the narrow existing road;

- the need for improving the Canyon Ferry/York Road intersection; and

- the need to consider improving Canyon Ferry Road from Montana Avenue to Canyon Ferry Lake, instead of just reconstructing only a short section of the route.

APPENDIX C contains a summary of the April 1995 public informational meeting held for the project.

Letters notifying various public agencies of the intent to replace the Prickly Pear Creek bridge and improve Secondary Route 430 were distributed during March and April of 1996. These letters provided agencies with a general description of the scope of work for the proposed project and in some cases, solicited information that could be used in the development of the environmental document. Agency correspondence resulting from this initial notification is included in APPENDIX B.

An Opportunity for a Public Hearing will be offered following FHWA's approval of this Draft Environmental Assessment. Written comments will be received on this document for at least 30 days following its distribution. Unless comments received on this document warrant further investigation, no additional public involvement is planned. Public and agency comments on this document will be evaluated to determine whether significant impacts will occur from any of the proposed alternatives; if further consideration of the impacts discussed herein is needed; and if new issues have arisen that need to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment. Appropriate revisions will be made to the text of the Environmental Assessment.

If no significant impacts are identified, MDT will submit the revised Environmental Assessment to FHWA and request that the agency make a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The FONSI will then be attached to the Environmental Assessment. Notice of availability of the FONSI and revised Environmental Assessment will be made to Federal, State, and local government agencies with interests in the project.

If significant impacts are found, MDT and officials from the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County must decide if an Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared for the proposed action.

C. Distribution List for Document

The following agencies, groups, and individuals are being sent a copy of this Environmental Assessment:

AGENCIES AND OTHERS WITH INTERESTS IN PROJECT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Main Interior Building, MS 2340
1849 C Street Northwest
Washington, DC 20240
Attn: Director, Office of
Environmental Policy & Compliance

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Geological Survey, MS 760
432 National Center
Reston, VA 22092
Attn: Chief, Environmental Impact
Assessment Program

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish & Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 10023
Helena, MT 59626

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park, Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626

US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resource Conservation Service
790 Colleen Street
Helena, MT 59601

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Corps of Engineers
301 South Park, Drawer 10014
Helena, MT 59626-0014

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, Montana 59620-0901
Attn: Permitting and Compliance Division

STATE LIBRARY
Collection Management Librarian
1515 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-1800

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL
Office of the Director
Capitol Post Office Box 215
Helena, MT 59620

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
Parks Division
1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
P.O. Box 1724
Helena, MT 59624-1724

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
P.O. Box 1725
Helena, MT 59624

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY ROAD AND BRIDGE DEPARTMENT
3402 Cooney Drive
Helena, MT 59601

CITY OF HELENA COMMISSION
316 North Park
Helena, MT 59623

CITY OF HELENA ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
316 North Park
Helena, MT 59623

CITY OF HELENA PLANNING DEPARTMENT
316 North Park
Helena, MT 59623

HELENA REGIONAL AIRPORT
2850 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59601
Attn: Ron Mercer

D. List of Agencies With Jurisdiction and/or Permits Required

The following agencies have permit requirements applicable to this proposed action:

- U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers (Regulatory Office) -- Nationwide *Section 404* Permit for the Prickly Pear Creek crossing

- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks - ***124SPA*** Permit as required under the *Montana Stream Protection Act*

- Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Permitting and Compliance Division - *Section 402*/Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit
  and
  Section 401 water quality certification (if needed to support a *Section 404* permit)

- Lewis and Clark County/Federal Emergency Management Agency -- Floodplain Development Permit for road and bridge development in the base floodplain

E. List of Other Agencies, Persons, or Groups Contacted or Have Contributed Information

The agencies and individuals below were contacted for information useful to the preparation of this Environmental Assessment. Pertinent correspondence from some of these individuals has been included in APPENDIX B.

- Larry Robertson, Resource Conservationist, U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service (Helena)

- John F. Wardell, Director, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VIII, Montana Office (contacted by letter bur no response received)

- Roxanne Lincoln, MPDES Storm Water Coordinator Montana Department of Environmental Quality

- Mary Ellen McDonald, Program Officer, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Parks Division, Resource & Recreation Bureau

- Kathy Macefield, City of Helena Planning Director

- Robert Rassmussen, Lewis and Clark County Planner

- Ron Mercer, Helena Regional Airport (Contacted by letter, but no response received)

Appendix A: List of Preparers

The following parties are responsible for the preparation and content of this document:

Joel M. Marshik, P.E.
Environmental Services Manager
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Dale W. Paulson
Environmental Coordinator
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park, Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626

The Montana Department of Transportation was assisted in the writing, coordination, and the development of supporting information for this document by:

Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc.
Consulting Civil Engineers, Planners and Designers
825 Custer Avenue
P.O. Box 5653
Helena, Montana 59604

Appendix B: Correspondence Pertinent to Project

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

1420 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

March 1, 1996

Daniel M. Norderud
Project Manager
Robert Peccia & Associates
P. O. Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604

Re: One Mile East of Helena (Canyon Ferry Road)
MDT Project STPHS 430-1(2); Control No. 2370

Dear Daniel:

We have reviewed the above-mentioned project and know of no Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act or Section 4(f) of the 1966 Department of Transportation Act impacts which would occur as a result of the proposed project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen McDonald

MARY ELLEN McDONALD
Program Officer
Resource & Recreation Bureau
Parks Division

cc: Region 3 Supervisor

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, OMAHA DISTRICT
215 NORTH 17TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-4978

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

March 4, 1996

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Federal Bldg 301 S.Park Drawer 10014
Helena, MT 59626
(406)441-1375

Daniel M. Norderud
Robert Peccia & Associates
P.O. Box 5653 825 Custer
Helena, Montana 59604

Dear Mr. Norderud:

Reference is made to your letter requesting comments concerning the upgrading of MDT Project STPHS 430-1(2) Control No. 2370 (Canyon Ferry Road) in Lewis & Clark County, Montana.

Under the authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Department of the Army permits are required for the excavation and/or the placement of dredged or fill material below the ordinary high water mark of our nation's rivers, streams, lakes or in wetlands.

If any of the proposed road alignment involves the excavation or filling in a waterway or wetland, then a Department of the Army permit may be required. The bridge replacement across Prickly Pear Creek may meet Nationwide Permit authorization under either Nationwide #3 or Nationwide # 14. Enclosed are fact sheets which describe the conditions associated with these authorizations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and if you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Robert E. McInerney
Robert E. McInerney
Montana Program Manager

Printed on Recycled Paper

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation
Service

790 Colleen Street
Helena, MT 59601
406-449-5278

RECEIVED
MAR 8 1996
ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

March 7, 1996

Mr. Daniel M. Norderud
Project Manager
Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc.
825 Custer, P.O. Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604

Subject: Soil information for MDT Project STPHS 430-1(2); Control No. 2370

Dear Mr. Norderud,

Soils to be concerned about are 218A- Meadowcreek-Fairway loams and 413A- Attewan loam. These soils are designated as prime farmland if irrigated and are also soils of statewide importance. Other soils in this area do not meet the criteria for prime, unique or important farmland.

If you need more information please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Larry Robertson

Larry Robertson
Resource Conservationist

The Natural Resources Conservation
Service is an agency of the
Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I *(To be completed by Federal Agency)*	Date of Land Evaluation Request **April 16, 19**
Name of Project **One Mile East of Helena -- MT Secondary Highway 430 (Canyon Ferry Road); STPHS 430-1 (2) 1; MDT Control # 2370**	Federal Agency Involved **U.S. DOT Federal Highway Administration/MDT**
Proposed Land Use **Roadway and Bridge Reconstruction and Highway R/W**	County and State **Lewis and Clark County, Montana**
PART II *(To be completed by SCS)*	Date Request Received by SCS 4/17/96

Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? *(If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form).*	Yes ☒ No ☐	Acres Irrigated nearly 100%	Average Farm Size - Alt B, C
Major Crop(s) Alfalfa Spring Grain	Farmable Land in Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: 207,000 %		Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: %
Name of Land Evaluation System Used LESA	Name of Local Site Assessment System LESA		Date Land Evaluation Returned by SCS 5/23/96

		Alternative Site Rating			
PART III *(To be completed by Federal Agency)* Land Evaluation Information		Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	No-Actio
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly		1.56	8.58	21.25	0.00
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C. Total Acres in Site		1.56	8.58	21.25	0.00
PART IV *(To be completed by SCS)* Land Evaluation Information					
A. Total Acres Of Prime And Unique Farmland		1.56	8.58	10.65	
B. Total Acres Of Statewide or Local Important Farmland					
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted		<.001%	<.001%	<.001%	
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value		10%	10%	10%	
PART V *(To be completed by SCS)* Land Evaluation Criterion Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted *(Scale of 0 to 100 Points)*		~~100~~ 73	73	74	
PART VI *(To be completed by Federal Agency)* Site Assessment Criteria *(These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(b)*	Maximum Points				
1. Area in Nonurban Use	15	12	12	10	
2. Perimeter in Nonurban Use	10	8	9	5	
3. Percent of Site Being Farmed	20	2	10	16	
4. Protection Provided by State and Local Government	20	0	0	0	
5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area	N/A	–	–	–	
6. Distance to Urban Support Services	N/A	–	–	–	
7. Size of Present Farm Unit Compared to Average	10	9	9	9	
8. Creation of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	0	0	0	
9. Availability of Farm Support Services	5	5	5	5	
10. On-Farm Investments	20	20	20	20	
11. Effects of Conversion on Farm Support Services	25	0	0	0	
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	5	5	5	
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	61	70	70	
PART VI *(To be completed by Federal Agency)*					
Relative Value Of Farmland *(From Part V)*	100	73	73	74	
Total Site Assessment *(From Part VI above or a local site assessment)*	160	61	70	70	
TOTAL POINTS *(Total of above 2 lines)*	260	134	143	144	

Site Selected: ALT. C FAVORED	Date of Selection 6/96	Was a Local Site Assessment Used? Yes ☐ No ☐

Reason For Selection: FULLY ADDRESSES SAFETY CONCERNS IN PROJECT AREA.

(See Instructions on reverse side)

Form AD-1006

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WATER QUALITY DIVISION

MARC RACICOT, GOVERNOR

COGSWELL BUILDING
1400 BROADWAY

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-2406
FAX (406) 444-1374

PO BOX 200901
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0901

RECEIVED
MAR 18 1996
ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

March 14, 1996

Daniel M. Norderud
Robert Peccia & Associates
PO Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604

Re: MDT One Mile East of Helena (Canyon Ferry Road) Project STPHS 430-1(2); Control Number 2370

Dear Mr. Norderud:

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Water Quality Division has reviewed the information received in my office on February 29, 1996 concerning the above referenced project. Based on the available information, it appears that coverage under the General Discharge Permit for Storm Water Associated with Construction Activity will be necessary. Other permits which may be necessary depending on the situation are a Construction Dewatering general permit, a 310 permit and a 3-A Authorization. Please find enclosed a Guide to Stream Permitting in Montana for your assistance.

Please call or write if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Roxann Lincoln CPSS
MPDES Storm Water Coordinator

TRL.1142

c: Karl Helvik, MDT Environmental Services

"AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER"

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
1410 8th Avenue • PO Box 201202 • Helena, MT 59620-1202 • (406) 444-7715 • FAX (406) 444-6575

MASTER FILE
COPY

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JAN 06 1995
ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

January 5, 1995

Joel Marshik, Manager
Environmental Services
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Re: STPHS 430-1(2)1
One Mile East of Helena
Control No. 2370, L&C Co

Dear Joel:

We have received the above referenced cultural resource report. The inventory looks good, and we will add it to our CRABS material. **We concur that site 24LC1206 is eligible for the NRHP. We also concur that sites 24LC1207 and 24LC1208 are not eligible due to the loss of substantial integrity.**

I request that you disregard this same letter dated December 27, 1994 because the site numbers were in error.

Sincerely,

Josef J. Warhank, Historian
Historical Survey Reviewer

File: Comp/ L&C Co/ MDT/ 1994

T06

Montana Department
of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Marc Racicot, Governor

JAN - 1996

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ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

January 2, 1996

Paul Putz
State Historic Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

CONCUR
PROJECT WILL HAVE
NO EFFECT ON NRHP QUALITIES
MONTANA SHPO
DATE 9/24/96 SIGNED

40
LC
13
13
03

Subject: STPHS 430-1(2)1
One East of Helena
Control No. 2370

Enclosed is the Determination of Effect for the above project. We have determined that the proposed project would have **No Effect** to the NRHP-eligible Bompart Dairy Complex (24LC1206). We request your concurrence.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline

Jon Axline, Historian
Environmental Services

Enclosure

cc: Jason Giard, P.E., Butte District Administrator
Carl Peil, P.E., Preconstruction Bureau
Joel Marshik, P.E., Environmental Services
Gordon Stockstad, Resources Section

DETERMINATION OF EFFECT

One Mile East of Helena

STPHS 430-1(2)1

Introduction

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) intends to construct approximately 1.1± miles of new roadway on Montana Secondary Highway 430 in Lewis and Clark County, Montana. The proposed project would begin approximately 400-feet east of the intersection of Custer Avenue/York Road and Secondary 430 (Canyon Ferry Road) and proceed due east to Milepost 1.1 on Canyon Ferry Road. The existing roadway was built by city and county construction crews and paved in the early 1970s; there have been no improvements to the roadway since it was paved in the 1970s. Figure 1 shows the project area on the 1994 General Highway Map.

The MDT's One Mile East of Helena project would include the construction of new roadway on a new alignment. The proposed roadway consist of a 40-foot wide paved surface; this would include two 12-foot driving lanes and two 8-foot shoulders. The proposed project would also include the reconstruction of the existing York Road-Secondary 430 intersection and the construction of a new prestressed concrete bridge over Prickly Pear Creek. Additional Right-of-Way (R/W) would be required for this project.

Significant Cultural Resources

A cultural resource inventory of the project area was conducted in 1994. The MDT and the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of one historic site: the Bompart Dairy Complex (24LC1206).

The Bompart Dairy Complex consists of four features, three of which are associated with the historic function of the property as a dairy farm. Because of its association with the local dairy industry and the integrity of the historic-age buildings on the site, it is eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A and C.

Project Impact

Three alternates were initially developed for this project. Both Alternate A and B would generally utilize the existing Present Traveled Way (PTW) with curve flattening on the substandard curve at the Bompart Dairy Complex. Alternative B, moreover, would have significantly encroached on the site's boundaries. After compiling comments from the public and local agencies. Alternative C was selected as the preferred alternative for this project. This alternative would utilize a portion of a county road to eliminate the need to flatten the curve on the PTW. Consequently, with Alternate C, the Dairy Complex would be bypassed to the north and the existing PTW abandoned as a segment of Secondary 430 (Figure 1).

At the Bompart Dairy Complex, therefore, there would be no R/W acquisition and

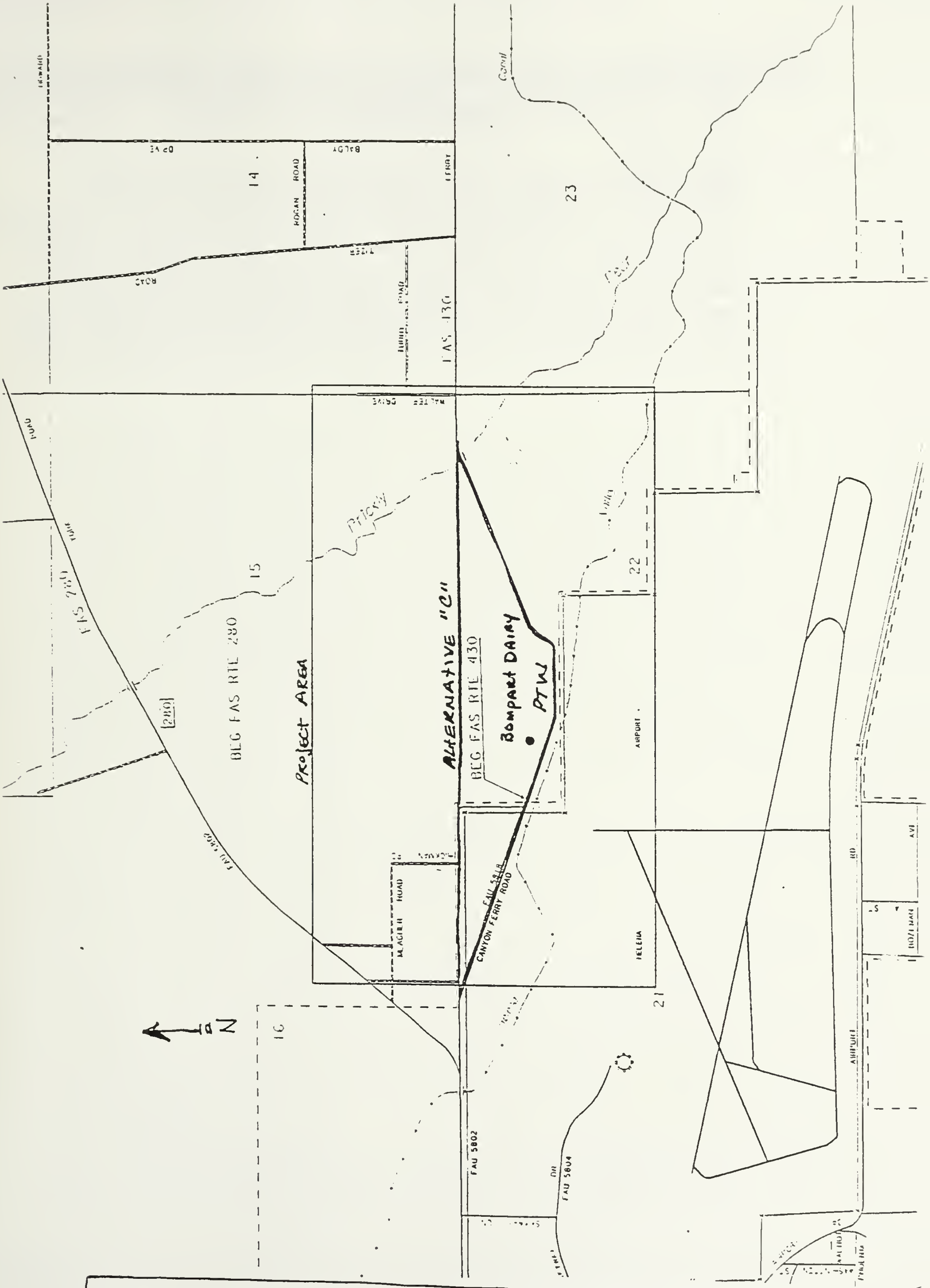

Figure 1. 1994 General Highway Map of the proposed Once Mile East of Helena project area.

no encroachment on the site boundaries. The site would be located outside the impact area for the project. The existing PTW, however, would be maintained for access to the site as it is an operating farm.

Project Effect

There would be **No Effect** to the NRHP-eligible Bompart Dairy Complex (24LC1206). The setting of the site would not be significantly altered because of the residential and commercial development that has occurred in the area within the last twenty years. The existing PTW, moreover, would be perpetuated, but would function only as an access to the Bompart property and to the adjacent Helena Valley Canal. The proposed roadway would be constructed along the north fenceline of the property and would not interfere with the historic function of the ranch. There would be no R/W acquisition from the site for the purposes of the project and the qualities that make it eligible for the NRHP would be perpetuated.

Appendix C: Public Meeting Comments

Public Meeting Summary

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ENVIRONMENTAL

Project Name: One Mile East of Helena
Project Number: STPHS 430-1(2) 1
Control Number: 2370
Meeting Date: April 20, 1995 - 7:00 pm
Place: MDT Auditorium

Purpose:

This was an information meeting to exchange ideas with the public regarding the project.

Attendees:

See attached list.

Summary:

Dave Dreher opened the meeting with a general introduction and introduced Loran Frazier, the primary presenter, and Jason Giard, the District Administrator.

Loran opened by explaining how the project came to be considered and some accident history on the section of road. He continued by detailing the four alternatives developed by the MDT. Alternate "A" - flattening the curve near the Burnham house and the water treatment plant only; alternate "B" - straightening the curve at the Burnham house until on the west side of the creek, then a gentle curve to meet the existing road; alternate "C" - eliminating all curves and continuing the road straight from the Burnham house/water treatment plant to the end of Custer Avenue East to eliminate the safety hazards presented by both curves; alternate "D" - addressing the curve at the Burnham house similar to alternate "B" and reducing the severity of the next curve west to improve the safety of the entire section of road.

Discussion generally favored alternate "C" with the exception of two individuals who live on Custer Avenue East who were concerned about the proximity of the traffic to their homes under this alternative. Possible mitigators were presented for this situation to include shifting the road slightly south.

Alternate "C" created two situations brought out by the group requiring further investigation. First, there was concern about a possible safety problem stemming from a straight section of good 40 foot wide road narrowing on both ends to older, narrow road. Secondly, the consensus was, something needs to be done with the wye intersection of Canyon Ferry Road and York Road if Alternate "C" is implemented. Either "T" York Road into Canyon Ferry Road or vice-versa.

Several individuals felt this wasn't enough, the entire road needs to be addressed, from the intersection with North Montana Avenue all the way to Canyon Ferry Lake. Loren and Jason explained the project was selected due to safety problems at the curve near Burnhams and the water treatment plant. The money could only be spent to fix those safety problems thereby limiting us to a portion of the road. Other portions of the road need to be addressed by the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County.

The group wanted the city and county to consider upgrading the other portions of the road. City and county representatives in attendance acknowledged the groups concerns, but explained some of the budget constraints they were facing.

By the end of the meeting the group felt the project should continue to be pursued using alternate "C", with some modifications to address the situation of traffic and noise near the homes on Custer Avenue East and the situation at the intersection of Canyon Ferry Road and York Road.

Public Meeting
Sign In Sheet

Project: One Mile East of Helena
Number: STPHS 430-1(2) 1
Control Number: 2370
Date: April 20, 1995 - 7:00pm
Place: Montana Department of Transportation Auditorium, Helena

(Please Print)

Name	Address
DAVE Korang	5465 York Rd Helena
Charlie Carson	2120 Custer Ave
PAt Gibson	5221 York Rd
Rich Gibson	3012 Canyon Ferry
Don Schmolke	4220 Canyon Ferry Rd
JERRY BROWN	3744 CANYON FERRY Rd.
Robert Garber	3963 Canyon Ferry Rd, E. Helena
Mary Montana	7950 Canyon Ferry Rd H. Mt
C Carson	2120 Custer Ave
Bill Verwolf	City of Helena
Nancy Burnham	2515 C.F Rd
Don + GARY Burnham	" " "
MARGE GRIFFITH	5495 York Rd
Diane Johnson	City of Helena / H+C Committee

RECEIVED
MAY 18 1995
DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
BUTTE, MONTANA

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

One Mile East of Helena
STPHS 430-1(2) 1
Control Number 2370

You are invited to make your comments on this form and leave it with the meeting officials or take it with you and mail it to Jason Giard, Division Administrator, PO Box 3068, Butte, MT 59330-3068 by May 22, 1995.

Please indicate your name, address and affiliation (if any) below. Thank you for your interest and comments on this project. Feel free to use the back and/or additional sheets of paper if necessary.

NAME AND ADDRESS: Pam & Howard Lund
3375 Wylie Dr #44 Helena, Mt 59601

COMMENTS:

We each drive this road at least four times a day everyday. We would really like to see the road straightened out. there are so many accidents on that bridge - many more than you are aware.

ACT	INF	BUTTE DISTRICT	DIS
		DISTRICT ENGINEER	✓
		DIST. CONST. SUPVR.	
		FIELD PROJ. MGRS	
		ENGR. OFFICER	
	✓	ENGR. SERV. SUPVR.	
		R/W	
		DESIGN	
		LAB	
		TRAFFIC	
		UTILITIES	
		CENT. SERV. SUPVR.	
		PERSONNEL SPEC	
		ACCOUNTING SPEC	
		CH. FLD. MAINT. BT. BO.	
		MAINT. SUPTS. BT. BO.	
		SHOP SUPTS. BT. BO.	
		FLD. SEC. SUPVR. BT. BO.	
		MOTOR CARRIER SRVS.	
	✓	DISTRICT FILE	
	✓	DENNIS UNSWORT	

om: MDTBUT::U2861   "LORAN FRAZIER" 18-APR-1995 09:55:09.78
o: MDTCLU::U2272
C:
bj: comments on Canyon ferry Road RS430

rom: MDTCLU::U8630   "SANDIE STIFFLER" 18-APR-1995 07:19:30.53
:   MDTBUT::U2861
:
ubj: Canyon Ferry Road

ren, I can't make the public hearing on Thursday April 20th concerning this
roject. We live farther east of this location and drive this route into town
uite often. We prefer alternate "C" which would eliminate all of the curves.
ile the curve and super on the bridge is a major problem in the area, the
" curves are pretty bad also. I'm sure that all of the accidents that occur
n those curves do not get reported. The sight distance around the house
aves a lot to be desired. With the increase in homes being built east of
is location, we feel that the best alternate is "C". Thanks for the
pportunity to comment.